

2012

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A STUDY OF TURNAROUND EFFORTS IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS:
CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATIONS THAT DETERMINE
WHY SOME EFFORTS SUCCEED AND OTHERS FAIL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

In

The Department of Educational Theory Practice and Policy

By
Angela Renee Lee
B.S., Southern University, 1991
M.Ed., Southern University, 1993
August 2012

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of this dissertation has been one of the most significant challenges I have ever undertaken. Without the genuine support of members of the Louisiana State University faculty, family, and friends, I doubt the sustenance of my tenacity to persevere.

Therefore, it is a great pleasure to acknowledge those who helped me write successfully. I thank the members of my committee: Dr. Roland Mitchell, Chairperson; Dr. Earl Cheek, and Dr. Eugene Kennedy for their guidance, critical questioning, and invaluable insights throughout the writing process. I thank Professor Craig Freeman for his service as the Graduate Dean's Representative. Also, I thank Dr. Dianne Taylor for starting me on this journey.

Thanks to Ms. Lois Stewart and Ms. Tara Stewart in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice as well as Ms. Joyce Andrews in the Graduate School for teaching me how to negotiate and appreciate the graduate school experience.

I am grateful for my family, who insisted that I complete this work, yet ensured that I maintained a healthy balance in my lifestyle: Ms. Johnnie Lee Harris, mom; Mr. Willie Lee, Jr., dad; Mr. John Harris, stepdad; Mrs. Monica Lee Foley, sister; and Mr. Errol Domingue, my husband.

I am indebted to friends such as Dr. Christopher Guillory, who would call me every day for weeks at a time to interrogate me about my progress as a form of motivation; Dr. Elizabeth Walsh, who provided advice and encouragement throughout this process; and Dr. Lisa Delpit, who inspired me to question and search deeply for insight into what superficially appears to be inexplicable.

I am thankful for Mr. Donald R. Dixon (1948-1997), my godfather, who stirred my intellectual curiosity and instilled in me while I was yet in middle school, the desire and drive to one day pursue this degree.

Finally, I share this accomplishment with every one of you who labored in the fields with head bowed and body bent, scrubbed floors on your hands and knees, took in other people's laundry at your home because the task could not be completed within the confines of your official domestic work day, entered back doors at the law's mandate, exercised self-restraint until it bordered on the precipice of lost dignity, and suffered countless inexpressible acts of dehumanization so that I would not have to. I thank you. At the commencement exercises, we all "Walk Together, Children."

To God be the glory.

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ABSTRACT

The inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has focused national attention on improving the academic achievement of all students. In response to this federal legislation, educators, policymakers and others have sought remedies to turnaround chronically low-performing schools. The academic achievement outcomes of implementing such strategies have been mixed. Some schools have experienced clear, unambiguous growth. Others have remained stagnant. Others have regressed. Because of these mixed results, the research was designed to ascertain the factors that determine what makes these strategies succeed or fail. Using the characteristics of High Reliability Organizations, the researcher used an interview guide that was developed by the researcher to interview 10 participants who consisted of teachers, principals, and their immediate district-level supervisors, as well as reviewed artifacts from four high-poverty schools that were all labeled as academically unacceptable by the state of Louisiana in 2007. The outcomes of turnaround strategies were mixed as measured by their school performance scores. Two of the schools experienced clear, unambiguous growth. One of the schools remained stagnant. The other school regressed. Findings of the data analysis indicated that schools with clear, unambiguous growth demonstrated all five characteristics of High Reliability Organizations. The schools that either remained stagnant or declined did not.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of NCLB, national attention has been focused on improving the academic achievement of all students (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2003). By 2014, public schools must ensure that all students are proficient in math and reading (Cicchinelli, Gaddy, Lefkowitz, & Miller, 2003; Hickok, 2004; Lugg, Buckley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002; O'Day, 2002). NCLB specifically targets schools that receive Title I funds, which provide funding for socioeconomically disadvantaged students who are failing or most at risk of failing to meet state academic standards (NCLB, 2003). The amount of funding allocated is based on the percentage of students who receive lunch either free of cost or at a reduced cost. Title I is the most important component of NCLB because: (a) the vast majority of funds are committed to Title I, and (b) Title I requires substantial state accountability for improved student learning as reflected on statewide testing (Braden & Schroeder, 2004).

To measure academic progress and subsequent compliance with the goals of NCLB, the Louisiana School Accountability System requires annual testing of all public school students in grades 3 through 11. According to the Louisiana Department of Education in its publication *Accountability at a Glance* (2010), the test is high stakes for students in grades 4 and 8. Students must meet or exceed the cut-off score in both English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics to be promoted to the next grade. Students failing these subtests are retained instead of being promoted to the next higher grade.¹ Students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 take a standardized, integrated test known as the *iLEAP*. The *iLEAP* combines a norm-referenced test, which measures a student's performance in comparison to the performance of students in a national

¹ Students in grades 4 and 8 who fail LEAP are provided summer remediation and an opportunity to retake the test(s) failed. These opportunities are available at no charge to the students, including transportation to and from the school sites where remediation and retesting are offered.

sample, with a criterion-referenced test, which measures the degree of mastery relevant to some instructional domain (Sax, 2010). The *i*LEAP is not a high stakes test. However, to graduate from high school, students are required to pass either the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE) or End of Course (EOC) exams, depending on when they entered high school. Students who entered high school prior to 2010-2011 take the GEE in grades 10 and 11. Beginning with the freshman class of 2010-2011, EOC tests replaced the GEE for graduation purposes. Students must meet or exceed the cut-off score in the following categories: English II or English III, Algebra I or Geometry, and Biology or American History. To measure the performance of schools in compliance with the federal accountability goals, the Louisiana Department of Education uses student scores on these standardized assessments in addition to other factors such as dropout and attendance rates.

Schools that fail to make adequate progress are subject to increasingly severe consequences and corrective action including reconstitution, state takeover, or designation as a charter school leading to a loss of federal funding for the local education agency for those schools (NCLB, 2003). Despite the fact that schools and school systems expend considerable resources to prevent punitive sanctions relative to student academic achievement, schools in Louisiana have made mixed progress towards the goals of the accountability system.

Statement of the Problem

Fueled by the federal accountability system, educators, policymakers, and others in the community have been seeking dramatic remedies to turnaround chronically underperforming schools (Chapman, 2002; Hassel & Steiner, 2003; Levin, 2006; Malen & Rice, 2004; Wong & Shen, 2003). In the United States, research investigating the effectiveness of specific turnaround strategies such as school improvement planning (Mintrop & MacLellan, 2002), the provision of

expert assistance (Duke, 2007; Duke, Tucker, Belcher, Crews, Harrison-Coleman, Higgins, et.al, 2005; McColskey & Monrad, 2004; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005), adoption of comprehensive reform models (Brady, 2003; Wang & Manning, 2000), and reconstitution and related takeover strategies, including privatization (Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, Albert, Mac Iver, Stringfield, et al., 2000; Cibulka, 2003; Kowal & Hassel, 2005; Maranto, 2005; Malen, Croninger, Muney, & Redmond-Jones, 2002; Phenix, Siegel, Zaltsman, & Fruchter, 2005; Rice & Malen, 2003) is underway.

Murphy (2009) posits that a review of the turnaround literature research in education leads to three conclusions: (a) there is a lack of empirical evidence to guide policymakers and educators; (b) there lacks a common conceptual understanding about the meaning of nearly all components of organizational turnaround; and (c) there is no shortage of ideas being promulgated to turn around failing schools. As if illustrating Murphy's position, thus far, the outcomes of turnaround strategies have led to varying levels of improvement according to the Louisiana accountability system. In fact, some schools have regressed. Further, turnaround strategies in areas outside of the PK-12 education sector is a growing body of empirical literature that may lend itself to the examination of implications for the education sector (Boyne, 2004; Center on Innovation & Improvement, 2007; Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Paton & Mordaunt, 2004; Walshe, Harvey, Hyde, & Pandit, 2004). However, there is little consensus on the essential components of successful school turnaround and even less understanding of the processes that are in operation during its implementation.

Background of the Study

Consistent with state accountability system mandates, the Louisiana Department of Education developed a weighted score known as the School Performance Score (SPS) to enable

comparisons of academic performance among public schools in the state. According to *Accountability-at-a-Glance* (2010), which is published by the Louisiana Department of Education, the SPS for schools with a K-5 grade configuration is calculated by students' performance on standardized tests, which contributes 90% of the total SPS, and by students' attendance rate, which contributes 10% of the total SPS. For schools with a K-8 or 7-8 grade configuration, the SPS is determined by student test scores, which contribute 90% to the SPS; attendance, which contributes 5% to the SPS, and the dropout rate, which contributes 5% to the SPS. The SPS for high schools, those schools with a 9-12 grade configuration, is determined by test scores, which contributes 70% to the SPS and a graduation index, which contributes 30% to the SPS.

Theoretically, the SPS can range from 0 to 200. The Baseline SPS is determined by the Growth SPS described above, and the average of the current and preceding year's Growth SPS. Based on the SPS, each school has a growth target that represents the amount of progress each school must make every year to reach Louisiana's SPS goal of 120 by the year 2014.

Since 2007, the starting point for this study, schools in Louisiana have demonstrated mixed results in growth. Specifically, schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP), a pre-determined quantitative annual goal in the school performance score (SPS) that has been configured such that the school reaches the 2014 SPS goal of 120. In addition, all subgroups must meet the requirements for academic performance. Subgroups that are evaluated include: African-American/Black, American Indian/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, White, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged. By this measure, some chronically low-performing schools have increased student achievement; others have remained stagnant; still others have regressed. According to NCLB, these schools

face dire sanctions, including reconstitution, state takeover, or designation as a charter school. The aim of the present study is to understand the organizational mechanisms in turnaround implementation that causes turnaround strategies either to succeed or fail when success or failure is defined according to the quantitative gains in student academic achievement specified by the Louisiana accountability system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this comparative case study is to examine the implementation phase of turnaround strategies and to determine the factors during the implementation of these turnaround strategies that caused the strategies either to succeed or to fail. To do this, the researcher probed the lived experiences of principals, teachers, and district leaders in three types of chronically low-performing schools: (a) schools that have shown clear and unambiguous growth, (b) schools that have remained stagnant and (c) schools that have regressed. A study of these schools will help increase the likelihood of success for the future implementation of turnaround strategies in similar school settings.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective adopted for this study is that of high reliability organization, a framework found in an area outside of the PK-12 education sector. Researchers have studied a group of organizations that by their purpose and nature are involved in sensitive, time-critical events, which if left unaddressed, would have catastrophic results (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005; Reason, 2000; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Bellamy et al, (2005) Reason (2000), and Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) explored the phenomena and science of systems that use tightly coupled processes to prevent accidents, and perform effectively and efficiently when errors do occur. The studied organizations are labeled High Reliability Organizations (HROs) because

they consistently produce expected, desirable outcomes (Bellamy, et al. 2005). Examples of HROs include air traffic control divisions, forest fire-fighting units, and nuclear power plants. Though the organizations are complex and multifaceted, they respond immediately and effectively whenever an aberrant event occurs.

Similar to the results produced by organizations that have developed into High Reliability Organizations, chronically low-performing schools require organizational mechanisms to address student needs that are both immediate and consistently accurate (Barkley, Bottoms, Feagin, & Clark, 2001). If student failure were viewed as a catastrophic event, as opposed to a normal event, systemic processes that are similar to those found in HROs would be in place to prevent failure. Arguably, effecting school turnaround requires schools to implement strategies that are characteristic of HROs.

Significance of the Study

Surveying the perspectives of teachers, principals, and district leaders relative to the implementation of turnaround strategies should lead to a better understanding of how such strategies could be appropriately implemented. This study was intended to explore the perceived effectiveness of the implementation of turnaround strategies and to serve as a guide to inform the implementation of future turnaround activities.

Research Questions

Based on the previous sections, the following research questions will drive the approach to the collection of pertinent data.

RQ1: What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround?

RQ2: How were the turnaround strategies implemented?

RQ3: How does the implementation design used to implement the turnaround strategies relate to characteristics of High Reliability Organizations (i. e., (a) a healthy preoccupation with failure, (b) a reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) a sensitivity to operations, (d) a commitment to resilience, and (e) deferring of critical decisions to those who have the highest level of expertise in the issue at hand).

RQ4: What factors during implementation contributed to the success or failure of the turnaround strategies?

Definition of Terms

Throughout the present study, several terms will be used, some of which are unique to the Louisiana accountability system. The following definitions are designed to enable the reader to gain full understanding of the context in which the study was conducted. Terms are presented for clarification in succeeding sections.

“Accountability” is the concept of holding educators responsible for students’ learning. The learning is measured in quantifiable terms and is linked to school or school system funding.

The “Growth School Performance Score” (Growth SPS) is the school performance score based on one-year results from the state’s accountability plan. It is assigned to each elementary and middle school, and combinations thereof, and is determined by students’ performance on both the LEAP and *i*LEAP, which contributes 90% to the total Growth SPS, and by students’ attendance rate, which contributes 10% to the total Growth SPS. Theoretically, the Growth SPS can range from 0 to 200 (Accountability-at-a-Glance, 2010).

The “Baseline School Performance Score” is determined by the Growth SPS described above, and the average of the current and preceding year’s Growth SPS (Accountability-at-a-

Glance, 2010). State educators aim for all schools to reach a Baseline SPS of 120 by the year 2014.

The phrase “free/reduced-price lunch” refers to a federal program that provides free or reduced rates for breakfasts and/or lunches to students whose parent’s/guardian’s income falls below a designated amount according to household size (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2009). All schools participating in the Federally-assisted National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs must make available free and reduced prices for lunch and breakfast.

The “*i*LEAP” is a standardized test administered annually to public school students in certain grades as part of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program. In response to the NCLB requirement that an achievement test in reading and mathematics be administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8 and once to students in grades 10 through 12, education officials in Louisiana implemented the *i*LEAP (integrated LEAP) in 2006. This norm-referenced test is administered to students in grade 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 (Accountability-at-a-Glance, 2010).

The LEAP and the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE) are standardized, criterion-referenced tests that are administered as part of the Louisiana accountability system. Both are high-stakes. Students who fail the English/Language Arts or math subtests are denied promotion to the next grade or graduation from high school. LEAP is administered at grades 4 and 8. The GEE is administered at grades 10 and 11. Based on their score on the respective subtests, students are categorized by the following achievement levels: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, or Unsatisfactory in each of the four core content areas, ELA, math, science, and social studies. Grade 8 students must score at least basic on either the ELA, or the math test, and at least be approaching basic on the other test to be promoted to grade 9. To earn a standard diploma, high

school students must score at least approaching basic on ELA and math and on either the science or social studies test (Accountability-at-a Glance, 2010).

“School Turnaround” is an emerging field in education reform that consists of the implementation of dramatic and comprehensive intervention in low performing schools that (a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years and (b) prepares the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performing organization (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

The phrase “high-poverty” denotes a school in which at least 65 percent of its student population qualifies for free or reduced meal prices.

The phrase “chronically low performing” describes any school labeled as academically unacceptable in 2008 by the Louisiana Department of Education because of the school’s failure to meet the minimum required school performance score and persisted in not meeting the required score in several consecutive, subsequent years.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) defined research assumptions as self-evident truths. It will be assumed that the district leaders, principals and teachers interviewed will have the appropriate certifications and/or will be highly qualified as defined by NCLB. The validity of the study will be predicated on the assumption that the participants will answer truthfully and accurately to the interview questions based on their personal experience (Bruyn, 1966). Also, it will be assumed that the lived experiences of the participants in this study could positively contribute to decisions concerning the implementation of school turnaround initiatives, which is an urgent national concern (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

The proposed study is not about individual exceptional educators or even the particular schools selected for study. Instead, the study is about the experience of participants as they develop, implement, and/or execute turnaround strategies in chronically low-performing schools. It will be assumed that the researcher will be unbiased. The assumption will be made that audio recording of the interviews will be consistent and an accurate representation of each participant's point of view.

Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Research Results, and Summary and Implications. Chapter 1, the introduction included discussions of the background of the study, the purpose of the study, an introduction to the theoretical framework, the significance of the study, research questions, operational definitions of important terms, and the assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations of the study. To facilitate the comprehension of the reader throughout the study, the literature review, chapter 2, contains a review of literature on the following topics: : (a) The Development of Educational Accountability in the U.S. from 1965 until the present, (b) The Effect of Accountability on the Education of Students in Chronically Low-Performing, High-Poverty Schools, (c) Characteristics of Chronically Low-Performing, High-Poverty Schools, (d) Results of Restructuring Alternatives in Chronically Low-Performing Schools, (e) What Works in High-Poverty Schools, (f) The High Reliability Organizational Framework: A Model for Implementing What Works in High Poverty Schools, and (g) The High Reliability Organizational Framework in Schools. Methodology, chapter 3 begins by describing the study's qualitative orientation and then clarifies the research context, methodology, participants, instrumentation, the design and phases of the study, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4, Research Results, explains descriptive data related

to the four case studies in this multiple case study approach. It provides the contextual background of each case, demographic and performance data of each case and the turnaround strategy. In addition, each characteristic of High Reliability Organizations is discussed as it relates to each case. Finally, the factors contributing to the success or failure of turnaround strategies is discussed. This chapter uses interview data to illustrate the study's findings. Finally, chapter 5, Discussion, Summary and Implications, explores the implications of the study findings in terms of the research questions.

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current study examined whether the High Reliability Organization (HRO) framework could contribute to ameliorate the challenge of improving school performance in chronically low-performing schools. To place the study in the literature for the reader, the researcher reviewed several areas, which included: (a) The Development of Educational Accountability in the U.S. from 1965 until the present, (b) The Effect of Accountability on the Education of Students in Chronically Low-Performing, High-Poverty Schools, (c) Characteristics of Chronically Low-Performing, High-Poverty Schools, (d) Results of Restructuring Alternatives in Chronically Low-Performing Schools, (e) What Works in High-Poverty Schools, (f) The High Reliability Organizational Framework: A Model for Implementing What Works in High Poverty Schools, and (g) The High Reliability Organizational Framework in Schools.

The Development of Educational Accountability in the U.S.

The No Child Left Behind Act culminates more than four decades of federal expansion into public education, which begins largely with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Congress passed ESEA in response to President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" (Spring, 1998). The major component of ESEA was Title 1, which provided programs for the "educationally deprived" (Spring, 1998). ESEA appropriated approximately \$2 billion in its initial year to help states improve educational opportunities for the socioeconomically impoverished. Johnson argued, "Nothing matters more to the future of our country; not our military preparedness, for armored might is worthless if we lack the brainpower to build a world of peace; not our productive economy, for we cannot sustain growth without trained manpower" (Spring, 1998, pp. 407-409).

However, the 1965 enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act failed to produce gains in student achievement. From 1963-1980, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores consistently declined. During Ronald Reagan's presidency in August of 1981, Secretary of Education T. H. Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in education to address this crisis in education under the authority of 20 U.S.C. 1233a to, among other purposes and functions, "review and synthesize the data and scholarly literature on the quality of learning and teaching in the nation's schools, colleges, and universities, both public and private, with special concern for the educational experience of teen-age youth" (U. S. Department of Education, 1983a). Their report, *A Nation at Risk*, focused on: assessing teaching and learning, comparing U. S. schools with those of other developed countries, the relationship between college admission requirements and students' achievement in high school, successful college preparation educational programs, the effect of major social and educational changes since the 1950s on student achievement, and defining the problems that need to be remedied to regain "excellence in education."

The findings of the commission presented in *A Nation at Risk* shocked the American public. Some of these findings included: approximately 13 percent of all seventeen year olds and up to forty percent of minority youth were functionally illiterate; standardized tests were lower than when Sputnik was launched in 1957, and between 1975 and 1980, high school math achievement dropped low enough that remedial math courses in public four-year colleges rose 72 percent (U. S. Dept. Ed., 1983b).

The findings and recommendations of *A Nation at Risk* covered four aspects of the educational process: (a) content, (b) expectations, (c) time, and (d) teaching (U. S. Dept. Ed., 1983c). The commission asserted that curriculum content had become diluted and without a

central purpose. Students had migrated from vocational and college preparatory programs to “general track” courses. The commission recommended that high school graduation requirements be strengthened to require a minimum foundation curriculum of English, mathematics, science, social science, and computer science.

The report defined expectations in terms of the level of knowledge, abilities, and skills graduates should possess. These expectations should be expressed in various ways, such as grades, graduation/advancement requirements, examinations, and difficulty of subject matter. Deficiencies listed in the report regarding expectations included declining amounts of homework, fewer required mathematics and science courses, increased enrollment in less demanding electives, and lack of challenge to students due to “written down” textbooks. The commission recommended that schools adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations, for academic performance using challenging materials in an environment that supports learning.

Findings regarding time showed that American students spent much less time on schoolwork, used time in the classroom and on homework ineffectively, and were not encouraged by schools to develop study skills required to use time well or the willingness to spend more time on schoolwork. The commission recommended that significantly more time be devoted to learning the minimum foundation curriculum through a more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened year.

The commission found that the field of teaching was not attracting enough academically able students and that teacher preparation programs needed substantial improvement. The commission anticipated a shortage of teachers in key fields, especially mathematics and science.

The commission recommended that teacher preparation programs be improved and/or to make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession.

The recommendations in *A Nation at Risk* promised lasting reform through demanding “the best effort and performance from all students, whether they are gifted or less able, affluent or disadvantaged, whether destined for college, the farm, or industry” (U.S. Dept. Ed. 1983d).

Public and political sentiment varied regarding how the nation should proceed following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. McGuinn (2006) noted that reaching consensus to fund reform efforts was difficult. While both Democrats and Republicans saw the need for improvement, each had different opinions on how to accomplish it. Republicans, such as Reagan, opposed federal funding and educational programs. Democrats saw the lack of funding as a key downfall.

Further, political groups argued about the role of the federal government in education. According to McGuinn (2006), the National Educator’s Association (NEA) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held a large Democratic constituency and opposed standards, testing, and accountability. Conservative groups, such as the Christian Coalition, Heritage Foundation, and others fought to stop the federal role in education from advancing. In the 1980s and 1990s, some conservatives fought to eliminate the federal role altogether. President Reagan advocated disbanding the Department of Education during his presidency. In a report published by the NEA in 1983, two months after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the NEA provided rationale for maintain a cabinet department for education:

State and local education officials would once again face a bewildering array of confused federal policies and practices. . . And no one in Washington would be accountable for the confusion. No one would be charged with the responsibility for preventing conflicting policies from developing or resolving such conflicts.

Reagan did not disband the Department of Education, but Congress decreased government spending on education and underfunded the proposed budget for the Department of Education (NEA, 1983). Consequently, *A Nation at Risk* was the beginning of an evolution in achievement testing and standards-based education reform.

The movement toward standards-based education and assessment that began with *A Nation at Risk* gained momentum with the passage of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA). IASA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). With the passage of IASA and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, in 1994 the ESEA focused on the needs of all students, not just the disadvantaged and children at risk of school failure (Jeynes, 2007). In exchange for emphasizing higher student learning outcomes, the revamped ESEA gave states and localities more flexibility to design and operate their own federally-funded education programs. During the next six years, states figured out for themselves the meaning of content standards, methodologies for setting performance standards, and the political and fairness issues surrounding the institution of both content and performance standards.

During the period from 1994 to 2000, most states instituted content standards, performance standards, collection of longitudinal data, and use of secure test forms each year. By 2000, 48 states and two jurisdictions, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, received approval from the Department of Education for their content standards development processes. With the majority of the states having made substantial progress into the arena of standards-based education reform, the stage was set for a revolution in testing (Jeynes, 2007).

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB), which was passed by a bipartisan majority as the twelve billion dollar

reauthorization of the ESEA (Bowman & Kearney, 2008). Under NCLB, schools were given mandates, such as a timeline, target population, and reporting procedures. By 2014, according to NCLB, all students must meet state proficiency standards (Fischer, Schimmel, & Stellan, 2007). The pressure for all students to meet these set performance standards has negatively impacted the education of the students who need the most support, those students who are from high-poverty socioeconomic backgrounds, the ones initially targeted in the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Schools Act.

The Effect of Accountability on the Education of Students in High-Poverty Schools

One of the contemporary educational reform agendas has as its central focus turning around chronically poorly performing schools, of which a significant number are high-poverty. Duke (2010) provides evidence that of the 12 percent of U.S. schools identified for improvement in 2005-2006, about a quarter of them “had a history of failing to meet state standards for four to six years” (p. 41). Turning around these schools is “the emerging response to an entirely new dynamic in public education: the threat of closure for underperformance” (Calkins, Guenther, Belfore, & Lash, 2007, p. 36). While one aim purported of accountability policies is to insure that all students receive high-quality instruction and reach a certain level of competence in core subject areas (Muller & Schiller, 2000), the threat of school closure has been prompted as a result of changes in those policies over the past fifteen years (Anyon, 2005). These threats have had a decisively negative impact on both educators and students.

One cause of the deleterious effects of the many educational reform policies is that they fail to acknowledge the full extent of the socioeconomic challenges facing many school age students (Leithwood, Harris & Strauss, 2010) such as poverty or lack of diversity in these students’ schools and communities. For failing schools, government-imposed models of school

intervention and improvements continue to be counterproductive, especially for schools located in the most vulnerable communities (Harris, James, Harris, & Gunraj, 2006). In fact, most of the strategies that accompany current educational reform models can actually harm the very schools they are intended to improve (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

Another cause of the negative effects of current educational reform policy is that the performance standard is relative and contestable. Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss (2010) described:

. . .in England, at one point all schools in which less than 25 percent of students achieved success in public examination at age sixteen were considered failing. The 25 percent threshold, an arbitrary line in the sand, categorized schools with 24 percent as failing and those with 26 percent as not failing. In 2008, this threshold was increased to 30 percent. Overnight more than four hundred schools that had not been considered as failing were catapulted into the ‘failing’ category. Indeed a number of schools that had been commended for their performance one week were being vilified the next as failing. In short, the definition of a failing school is relative. There is no absolute measure (p. 36).

This trend follows in the U. S. For example, one school district in Louisiana currently has 10 percent of its schools labeled as poorly performing. However, when the performance standard is raised in the next two years, if schools remain at their current performance levels, the rate will jump to 25 percent. The proverbial “line in the sand” does not take into account improvement trends; it is merely an arbitrary threshold. Compounding the problematic effect of this moving threshold is the pejorative labeling of schools serving students with the greatest needs, to wit, students of color and students of poverty, which results in further stigmatizing these students as virtually uneducable with labels such as “in need of assistance,” “low performing,” “underperforming,” “in challenging circumstances,” “failing,” or “in special measures” (Mintrop, 2004).

The effort to measure the growth of student achievement as mandated by accountability policies has resulted in other negative consequences. Educators and students are forced to

reckon with the impact of a significant narrowing and simplification of the taught curriculum because of the criteria used for judging school performance—typically student scores on tests of math and language skills and formal assessment results (Rogers & Ricker, 2006). This narrowing and simplification have resulted in the reduction of the quality and quantity of curricula that are taught to students (McNeil, 2000; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2000; Smith, 1991). Essentially, teachers in schools labeled as low performing feel forced to use an excessively test-explicit instruction warping the curriculum so that it focuses almost exclusively on content tested. Further, teachers are often required to design classroom tests so that they mimic the format of the standardized tests used for accountability purposes regardless of the format the teacher believes best allows students to demonstrate their competence. These practices are all in an attempt to improve student test scores. Such mandated practices have forced out the best teachers and de-skilled those who remain (Hoffman, Assaf, Pennington, & Paris, 2001; Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, Yarbough, Davis, 1999; McNeil, 2000).

Researchers identified other negative outcomes. Dee (2002), for example, found reductions in educational attainment, particularly for black students. Carnoy, Loeb, and Smith (2001) found that the increased criteria for student performance under current accountability policy have made it more difficult for students to pass courses, thereby increasing student retention rates and decreasing graduation rates. Haney (2000) reported that while retention rate increased steadily for all ethnic groups, it increased substantially for blacks and Hispanics. Szymanski (2010) found the same result for students in Louisiana. Evidence of higher retention rates due to the new focus on assessment is important because retention is a strong predictor of dropping out. Rumberger (1995) showed that retained students are four times more likely to drop out, even after controlling for a myriad of background and school measures.

Characteristics of Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Chronically low-performing schools are frequently plagued by high rates of poverty. Researchers have shown that the negative impact of poverty on education is staggering. To understand the expanse and effect of poverty in schools, a discussion of poverty in the United States follows. The poverty rate in the United States (U.S.) increased during the economic downturn of the late 2000s. In 2008, the official poverty rate was 13.2%; in 2009, the rate was 14.3% (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010). The 2009 poverty rate was not only the highest since 1994, representing 43.6 million people (DeNavas-Walt, et al., 2010), it was also the second annual increase since 2004 that is statistically significant (DeNavas-Walt, et al., 2010).

The overall poverty rate and its fluctuations differ from the rates and fluctuations for children under the age of 18, which increased between 2002 and 2006 from 12.1% to 17.4 % and increased again between 2008 and 2009 from 19.0% to 20.7% respectively (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010). These data are compelling because children living in poverty achieve less academically when the detrimental effects of poverty go unaddressed. Knapp (2001) and Thomson and Harris (2004) found that while the general attainment levels of poor children have improved over time, the learning achievement gap between the majority of children from low-income families and their more affluent peers has widened.

Sociologists Lee and Burkam (2002) examined the cognitive abilities of African American and white children as they began formal schooling in kindergarten. Their findings indicated that race and ethnicity are interconnected with socioeconomic status. Lee and Burkam reported “34% of black children and 29% of Hispanic children are in the lowest quintile of SES compared with only 9% of white children” (p. 2). Children of minority groups enter school both cognitively and socially disadvantaged in comparison to white children (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

These differences, which are evident before children enroll in kindergarten, are magnified as they progress in schools (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

There is a correlation between poverty and school achievement and that African American children, many of whom live in poverty, achieve disproportionately at a lower level than their white counterparts (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Table 1 demonstrates this disparity. The table illustrates that African American children enter school less prepared than their more affluent white peers. For example, the reading skills of African American children 4 and 5 years old were 27% below that of white children of the same ages. On average, in reading, African American children scored at the 34th percentile, while white children scored at the 50th percentile. Similarly, mathematics achievement for African American 4 and 5 years old was, on average, at the 27th percentile, while their white peers scored at the 50th percentile. The achievement gap begins in kindergarten.

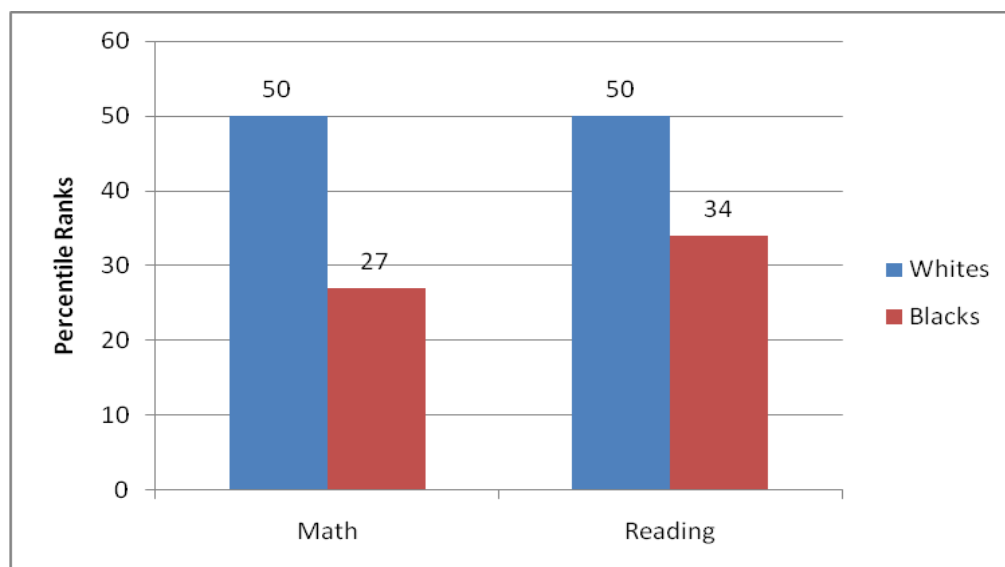


Figure 1. Math and Reading Performance of Black and White Students at the Start of Kindergarten.² (Adapted from Lee & Burkam, 2002, pp. 58, 60, figures 3.1 and 3.2 and Rothstein, 2004, pp. 54, 55, figures 2A and 3A).

² The performance of black students has been normalized to the performance of white students (Lee & Burkam, 2002; Rothstein, 2004)

The harmful effects of poverty cannot be dismissed, as found by Rothstein (2004) who stated, “socioeconomic differences [will] produce an achievement gap between students from different social classes” (p. 14). Rothstein further stated:

Lower class children usually enter school less equipped academically and with fewer resources than their middle class counterparts. Thus, children from lower social classes and from many racial and ethnic minorities, even in the best schools, will achieve less, on average, than middle-class children. (p. 14)

Chudgar and Luschei (2009) supported these findings. They argued that socioeconomic status typically explains more than half the variation between schools in pupil achievement, and that low family income in childhood years makes a significant difference to later academic outcomes. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2008) claim “. . . the elimination of variation within socioeconomic groups is inconceivable. Closing the achievement gap, which implies elimination of variation between socioeconomic groups, is extraordinarily difficult, but worth striving for.”

Yet, many challenges attributed to chronically low-performing and high-poverty schools are framed in terms of student characteristics. These challenges include academic underachievement (Bartz & Evans, 1991; Cotton, 1991; Kretovics, Farber, & Armaline, 1991; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Ornstein, 1991; Stephen, Varble, & Tait, 1993); lack of motivation for school success (Grossman, 1995; Delpit, 2003; Maeroff, 1994; Villegas, 1994); high dropout and truancy rates and low attendance rates (Bartz & Evans, 1991; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007; Cotton, 1991; Domanico, 1994; Elliott, Jackson, & Alvarez, 1993; Grossman, 1995; Kozleski, Sands, & French, 1993; Kretovics, Farber, & Armaline, 1991; Stephen, Varble, & Tait, 1993); and discipline problems (Kretovics, Farber, & Armaline, 1991). Further, all of these challenges can be compounded by a high degree of homogeneity within the student population, where the social mix itself becomes a barrier to increasing student achievement (Thrupp, 2001). In aggregate, these circumstances would impair the learning of

almost any group of students. Interestingly, few studies indicate that these issues are evident in schools attended primarily by more affluent and white students.

Other characteristics are framed in terms of home conditions. Typically, home-school relationships are strained in most high-poverty schools (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001; Menacker, Hurwitz, & Weldon, 1988). Children of all ages are distracted when their home and community environments present threats of harm and even death (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001; Bartz & Evans, 1991; Burnstein, Cabello, & Hamann, 1993; Cotton, 1991; Dandridge, 1993). “The urban child,” Williams and Williamson (1992) contended “characteristically lives in a context that is epitomized by violence, drugs, gangs, and an unstable family life” (p. 9). Threats children face also come in more subtle ways, such as an inadequate diet, lack of global health care, and unresponsive schools. Additionally, home-school relationships are strained because of parents’ own unpleasant school experiences which leads to mistrust (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2001) and because of the cultural incompetence of school staff which reinforces that mistrust (Delpit, 2003; Grossman, 1995). Cultural competence is not inconsequential in schools attended by students living in poverty. A failure of cultural competence on the part of teachers and principals leads to misunderstandings between school professionals and the students and parents they are supposed to serve (Delpit, 2003; Gomez, 1993; Grossman, 1995; Kozleski, Sands, & French, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Given the prevalence of racism in U.S. society (López, 2003; Taylor & Clark, 2009), it is incumbent on school principals, rather than students and their parents, to assure cultural competence and sensitivity on the part of the school staff.

Although poverty is widely considered to be exclusively an urban problem, it is not. Rural poverty has exceeded that of urban areas every year since poverty began to be measured in the 1960s (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 2009). Rural communities are rapidly losing

population (Gibbs, 2005; Huang & Howley, 1991; Johnson, Elder, & Stern, 2005; Long, 1987; Malhoit, 2005; Rural Sociological Society, 2006), which shrinks the tax base and school district budgets. Therefore, similar types of challenges plague chronically low-performing and high-poverty rural schools. Like high-poverty urban schools, high-poverty rural schools are characterized by student drug abuse, unstable families, and violence (Stewart, Gavazzi, McKenry, & Sheidegger, 2001). Students attending such schools historically underperform their more affluent peers and many of these students become part of the school-to-prison pipeline as they get older (Wald & Losen, 2003).

While high-poverty schools are frequently, and aptly, viewed as failures, failure, however, may be ascribed more accurately to the district and the state than to these schools. Characteristics of most high-poverty schools include unqualified teachers, dilapidated buildings, lack of resources, inadequate funding, and inefficient bureaucracies that result in consistently low student performance, high dropout rates, and poor attendance (Noguera, 2003; Taylor & Clark, 2009). In urban settings, high-poverty schools have higher school enrollments, more students per classroom (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), a higher proportion of low-income students of color (Cuban & Usdan 2003), and offer curricula and pedagogy that are criticized for their lack of relevance to the lives of the students (Anyon, 1980; Delpit, 2003; Stephen, Varble, & Taitt, 1993). Further, the turnover rate among faculty and administrators is higher than their more wealthy counterparts, with Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, and Wheeler (2007) finding that between 1996 and 2004 in North Carolina schools, the turnover rate for principals is highest in the schools with the highest levels of poverty with principals moving to a school with a poverty rate that averaged 4.8% lower than the school they left. Supporting the assertion that

these conditions exist in rural areas also, Noguera contends that “wherever poor people are concentrated and employment scarce,” public schools are frequently in dire straits (p. 3).

The Results of Restructuring Alternatives in Chronically Low-Performing Schools

When a school fails to reach the yearly targets set by No Child Left Behind, after four years of being “in need of improvement,” it falls prey to the most severe sanctions of the law. The school must: (a) turn over the school operations to the state, (b) turn over the operations to a private company, (c) reopen as a charter school, or (d) reconstitute the school by replacing a majority of all the teachers, staff, and administrators. Each of these options appeals emotionally and politically to those seeking dramatic recourses for chronically low-performing schools. However, the effectiveness of each as it relates to student achievement must be examined.

Wong and Shen (2003) conclude that “research has lagged” about the effects of takeovers on student achievement and note that it is “difficult to make generalizations about student achievement.” However, they do note, on the basis of 14 cases, that elementary students seem to do better academically following a state takeover, as they do not have to reverse previous negative effects. Yet, a 2009 study, commissioned by a Milwaukee civic group, reported that researchers found little conclusive evidence on test score improvements and that the resulting changes could be attributed to a multitude of sources (Allen, Henken, & Dickman, 2009).

Educational Management Organizations (EMOs) have a similar appeal as takeovers of chronically low-performing schools. In a 2007 study, the RAND Corporation found that none of the three external provider groups (for-profits, non-profits and universities) produced a statistically significant advantage in student achievement (Gill, Zimmer, Christman, and Blanc, 2007). In a 2009 follow-up study, Peterson and Chingos compared Philadelphia schools that had been taken over by for-profit companies with those taken over by non-profit companies. They

concluded that non-profit EMOs had a negative effect, in general, although not statistically significant. A generally positive for-profit effect was reported, although statistically significant only for math. Researchers concluded that the financial incentive due to for-profit managers may have contributed to their success (Peterson & Chingos, 2009).

Like the other restructuring alternatives, charter schools generate emotional and political passions. However, there is a strong research consensus that charter schools show no substantial achievement advantage on average (Hill, Angel, & Christensen, 2006; Miron, 2008; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2005).

School reconstitution has been touted as well as a politically expedient solution for chronically low-performing schools. However, little is known of its effectiveness. The Center on Education Policy reported in its study of five states: “None of the five federal restructuring options were associated with a greater likelihood of a school making AYP overall or in reading or math alone” (Center on Education Policy, 2008). Similarly, the Education Commission of the States reported that the reconstitution evidence to date is mostly anecdotal and that the limited evidence in San Francisco reflected uneven test score results (Ziebarth, 2004).

None of the four major restructuring options for schools has been proven to be effective reform strategies. If the purpose of reforms is to improve student achievement, perhaps there are other factors to consider when implementing these strategies.

What Works in High-Poverty Schools

The search for what works in schools that serve students from high-poverty circumstances is storied. This section briefly recounts that history from the mid-1960s on. It begins with a discussion of the effective schools literature in which researchers identify elements of the school environment common to high-poverty, high-performing schools.

Research interest in effective schools evolved in response to the 1966 report of the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS), which was led by James Coleman, funded by the federal government, and known as the Coleman Report. The EEOS was authorized by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to examine educational opportunities available to children who differed by race and country of origin (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, n.d.).

Stunning conclusions reported by Coleman were that overall school quality had less to do with a student's achievement than did "the social composition of the school...and the student's family background" and that if black children were in majority white classrooms, the black students would achieve at a higher level (Kiviat, 2000). Researchers who were familiar with schools that were exclusively, or nearly exclusively, attended by African American children who scored well on achievement tests took exception to Coleman's findings. Their work gave rise to what became known as the effective schools movement.

Ron Edmonds was one of the preeminent scholars and original researchers of effective schools. In his 1979 article "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," he wrote:

How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. . . . We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; we already know more than we need to do that; and whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far." (pp. 22-23).

Rejecting Coleman's conclusions, Edmonds argued instead that equity and the "mastery of basic skills" were necessary to overcome the effects of poverty on the learning of elementary school children (Edmonds, 1979, p.15). Edmonds explained that "by equity I mean a simple sense of fairness in the distribution of the primary goods and services that characterize our social order"

(1979, p. 15) and that equity in “public schooling begins by teaching poor children what their parents want them to know and ends by teaching poor children at least as well as it teaches middle class children” (Edmonds, 1979, p. 15). According to Andrews and Morefield (1991):

The early research findings of Ron Edmonds, Larry Lezotte, and others challenged the genetic/familial explanations of differences in outcomes [espoused by Coleman (1966)]. [Thus], by identifying schools that were effective with children, regardless of family income or ethnic status, the effective school research... attributed differences in children’s performance to schools themselves (p. 271).

Through their research on public schools attended by the urban poor, these researchers garnered national attention that moved the conversation, if not the practice in schools, from a deficit model of low-income children to conception of these children as capable learners.

Effective schools researchers assert that there are several attributes that characterize successful schools for children of color and of poverty (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998; Comer, 1993; Meier, 1995; Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996). Known as the correlates of the effective schools, these elements are strong instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, a safe and orderly environment, a climate of high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relationship, the opportunity to learn, and student time on task (Bliss, Firestone, & Richards, 1990; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 1991; Lezotte & Pepperl, 1990). Several studies have examined the characteristics of effective schools and the effective school movement (Purkey & Smith, 1983, Brophy & Good, 1986; Bliss, Firestone & Richards, 1991, Peterson & Lezotte, 1991, Andrews & Morefield, 1991; Bell, 2001, Marzano, 2005). Thus, the effective schools movement yielded research evidence regarding specific characteristics of high-poverty, high-performing schools.

Similarly, Bell (2001) investigated the characteristics of high-poverty, high-performing schools. In her article, Bell discussed the outcome of the High-Performing, High-Poverty

Symposium in California which included about 200 of the state's education leaders collaborating with 12 California high-poverty, high-performing school leaders. The results indicated 14 common factors inherent in high-poverty, high-performing schools, which included the following (as cited in Bell, 2001, p. 10):

- Implement rigorous standards for all students as the school's main goal
- Focus on delivery of high-quality teaching and learning for all students
- Emphasize hard work, high expectations, and persistence
- Promote discipline and a safe, orderly environment as key to learning
- Make district support evident and essential
- Have principals who are models of strong instructional leadership
- Have principals who are persistent and innovative in obtaining resources to serve students' needs
- Share leadership among administrators, faculty, and parents
- Collaborate on school goals and professional development
- Regularly use assessment as a diagnostic tool to reinforce the school's academic goals
- Intervene early and often to promote the academic success of all students
- Promote a policy of inclusiveness and a sense of family
- Work actively with parents to extend the mission of the school into the home
- Help faculty and students see themselves as part of the system as a whole through articulation of the academic program across grade levels

These findings, as Bell notes, "reflected similar findings in the current research on teaching and learning in high-performing, high-poverty schools" (Bell, 2001, p. 9). It is clear, however, that specific characteristics are common to high-performing, high-poverty schools in contributing to

their effectiveness.

The center for public education in their investigation on high-poverty, high-performing schools found seven key factors that contribute to school effectiveness. They identify the following criterion:

- Schools and staff support the belief that all students can and will learn
- Ongoing assessment in the school and classrooms allows teachers to individualize instruction for students;
- Aligning curriculum with instruction and assessment provides teachers with a successful system;
- School leadership promotes a collaborative model with teachers involved in decision-making;
- Teachers collaborate across grade levels and curriculum areas to ensure that teachers and students receive the support they need;
- Classrooms with highly qualified teachers enable students to succeed;
- Family involvement in a child's education positively affects student achievement

(Center for Public Education, 2005).

These characteristics are similar to the correlates of the effective schools research. As Peterson and Lezotte (1991) suggest, the “early work in school improvement based on the effective schools research and the writings of Edmonds assumed that an effective school was one defined by both quality educational programs and equity of achievement across different subsets of students” (Peterson & Lezotte, 1991, p. 129). Similarly, Firestone (1991) notes that the effective school research has remained closely aligned with the early principles of what constitutes effective schools (Firestone, 1991, p. 16). Firestone (1991) further asserts that:

ninety two percent of the effective schools programs reported that they emphasized instructional leadership and raising staff expectations, 88 to 89 percent monitored student achievement and stressed basic skills acquisition, and 76 percent worked on developing a safe and orderly school environment (Firestone, 1991, p. 16).

In summary, the correlates of the effective schools research describe the components of school environment that are essential to improving student achievement for high-poverty schools. Since researchers have demonstrated what works in high-poverty schools, it is logical to examine next how we implement what works in high-poverty schools. High Reliability Organizational theory offers a framework for a model that may increase the success of strategies designed to increase student achievement.

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

The study of High Reliability Organizations may offer schools a model for implementing turnaround and other school improvement strategies. HRO studies emerged in the 1980s in organizational research, largely sparked by Charles Perrow's 1984 work on Normal Accident Theory. Perrow (1999) described accidents as inevitable in complex and tightly coupled technological systems. Even though Perrow remained skeptical about the degree to which complete remedies exist for complex and tightly coupled systems (Perrow, 2008), HRO researchers seek to identify the mechanisms that produce reliably accident-free operations and reduce risk across hazardous and risky systems (Marais, Dulac, & Leveson, 2004).

In 1987, Karl Weick observed that trial and error approaches, commonplace in less risky systems, are not viable in hazardous ones. In hazardous systems, alternative strategies are employed to address what Weick (1987) termed "the problem of requisite variety" (p.112). The problem of requisite variety arises when "the variety that exists in the system to be managed exceeds the variety in the people who must regulate it" (p. 112). In summary, in order to operate adequately, a complex system must be matched with a requisite and comparable level of variety

of information, communication, and responsiveness within the organization managing the system.

To identify these alternative strategies, researchers at Berkeley and the University of Michigan (Roberts, Stout, & Halpern, 1994; Roberts, Rosseau, & LaPorte, 1994; Weick & Roberts, 1993) determined that HROs have evolved structures that enable them to achieve well-coordinated centralization and decentralization (Weick & Putnam, 2006; Roberts & Bea, 2001; Roberts, Stout, & Halpern, 1994). This balance in structure serves to enhance and optimize an organization's options when neither mandated procedures nor standardization are well-suited for addressing emergencies that have no clear precedent (Weick, 2001). HRO investigators study the strategies that enable flexible shifting between centralized and decentralized control. The resulting strategies, principles of HROs, permeate an organization and its culture in a manner that supersedes standard organizational structure (Weick, 2001).

The principles associated with HROs were identified from studies of a variety of organizations involved in hazardous work (Roberts, Stout, & Halpern, 1994; Roberts, Rosseau, & LaPorte, 1994; Weick & Roberts, 1993). Roberts (1990) determined that built-in redundancy, such as buddy-systems, multiple means of communication, and conditioned sensitivity to possible failure in nuclear-powered aircraft carriers enhanced the reliability of their performance. Babb and Ammons (1996) reported that extensively training transport officers to anticipate the unexpected was related to high reliability in transporting prisoners. Research in chemical processing plants demonstrated a relationship between coherent incident reviews and cyclical crises, recurring problems that occur due to systemic flaws inherent within a process (Carroll, 1998). In working with three major airlines, Gittell (2000) found measures of relational coordination, that is, the management of interdependent tasks carried out through shared goals,

shared knowledge, and mutual respect, significantly correlated to multiple measures of organizational performance, including both quality and efficiency. In essence, the quality and efficiency of an organization is a direct result of the coordination of the interdependent tasks performed in pursuit of the shared desired outcome (see figure 2).

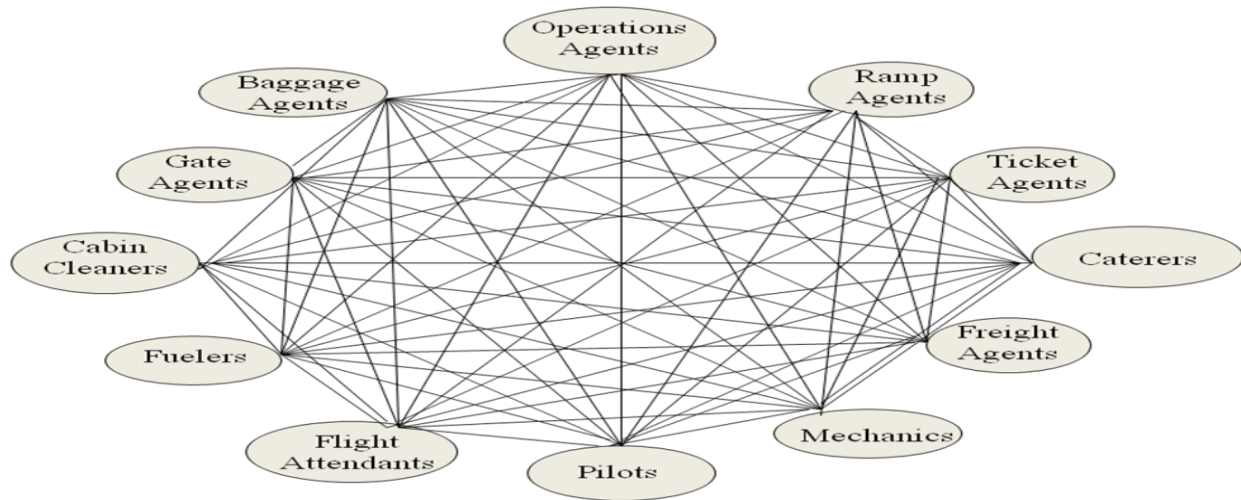


Figure 2. A graphic illustration of the relationship among interdependent entities to complete flight departure (Gittell, 2010).

Unexpectedly, flexible authority structures were found to be common in High Reliability Organizations from all industries and greatly facilitated communication switching from largely vertical to horizontal when necessary (Reason, 1990). In a review of catastrophic accidents such as the Challenger shuttle, Roberts and Bea (2001) indicated that managerial causes such as lack of deference to expertise and oversimplification of processes contributed more to failure than did design flaws.

Emerging from studies of these organizations are common strategies, or principles, that were developed to avoid major failures. These principles include (a) a healthy preoccupation with failure, (b) a reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) a sensitivity to operations, (d) a commitment to resilience, and (e) deferring critical decisions to those with the highest level of expertise regarding the issue at hand regardless of the individual's hierarchical position (Weick

& Sutcliffe, 2001). The principles inform and influence one another and drive the operation of the organization (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) such that error detection and correction is a primary goal of all HROs. A discussion of each principle as described by Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) follows.

Healthy preoccupation with failure

Central to HRO operations is constant awareness that a catastrophic accident may occur at any time. This level of awareness prompts the organization to engage in frequent, sometimes brutal, self-analysis. HROs reject the notion that errors can be eliminated in complex operations; therefore, the most effective action is to be proactive. Errors in process are sought out assiduously, exposed, and shared widely. The culture becomes one that focuses on learning rather than fixing (Carroll, 1998). An organizational learning environment is maintained through well-timed briefings where the detection and resolution of errors is discussed and analyzed, contributing to the continuous improvement of processes. Continued communication following errors serves to build situational awareness, which is a comprehensive understanding of the mission while evaluating whether the mission objectives were met, analyzing why they were not, and allows the search for trends, either strengths or weaknesses in the processes, and communicate that learning to the rest of the organization. In addition, HROs assure that staff have access to multiple and redundant communication systems. Remaining mindful that potentially catastrophic events may occur at any time creates a heightened cognizance of dangerous conditions. When proactively seeking out potentially dangerous conditions becomes inculcated as an aspect of the routine, errors are detected and resolved at the emerging stages, before they become catastrophic.

Reluctance to simplify interpretations

Because HROs operate in complex environments, it is understood that their functioning is not compatible with simplified approaches to error detection and correction. Error events are not interpreted to falsely minimize the potential level of danger. Leaders in these organizations do not assume that a given sequence of events, or mishaps, will automatically lead to an expected outcome. Instead, each event is examined within its current context. To gain full knowledge of each given event, boundary spanners, persons with diverse experience, who are skeptical about party-line knowledge, and who have the ability to incorporate updated and differing views, are valued. These organizational members link the organization to the external environment (Burt 1992; Williams 2002) through the sharing and exchange of information (Kapacu, 2005). The fundamental task of boundary spanners is to make decisions concerning information that is gathered (Grunig, 1992). This is critical to strategy since simplification of the problem results in a loss of information, detail, and inaccurate representations of what is happening.

Sensitivity to operations

Coupled with a healthy preoccupation with failure is the laser-like attention to events occurring at the front lines. Sensitivity to operations permeates the organization, prompting leaders and others to stay in touch with all aspects of the organization's high risk functions, to detect latent errors, and to take corrective action before latent errors grow into a catastrophic event. Latent errors are operational deviations that generate most, if not all, of the components of a potential failure, before the failure itself occurs. The Challenger disaster provides an example of a latent error. Prior to the launch of the Challenger, engineers expressed concern about the integrity of O-rings on the shuttle. Temperatures the night before were substantially below the minimum established for the O-rings causing the concern. Weakened O-ring integrity, a latent

error, would not have caused an accident had the launch been aborted. Had the launch been aborted, the O-rings could have been replaced. Managers at NASA, however, overruled the engineers and scheduled the launch. The latent error became manifest within two minutes of the launch. The Challenger disintegrated and all crew members were killed.

Commitment to resilience

HROs commit to resilience, that is, an understanding that no two emergency incidents are identical. Therefore, frequent training is provided that encourages personnel to look beyond typical approaches and outcomes and prepares them to deal more effectively with unplanned events. The commitment to resilience builds the informed audacity of the staff. People in HROs learn to rely upon this innovative or adaptive expertise.

Deference to expertise

Deference to expertise enables higher-level decision-making at the line level. Leaders in HROs select key decision makers based on their expertise in the situation at hand, rather than their rank in the organization. The lines of authority shift dramatically and effectively according to the tempo of operations.

The early research on HROs was criticized because of its focus on processes in a few fields, specifically naval aircraft carrier aviation, air traffic control operations, and nuclear power plants, organizations that have command and control over their technical cores and are highly regulated (Roberts, 2009). Since the 1980s, however, the study of high reliability has become more widespread. In 1999 and again in 2001, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies conducted studies of the quality of health care in the United States (Kohn, Corrigan, & Donaldson, 1999; Committee on Quality of Health Care in America, 2001). These studies led to publications about health care settings as high- or low-reliability organizations. Currently,

HRO concepts are being effectively used in the medical industry (Klein, Ziegert, Knight, & Ziao, 2006; Xiao, Moss, Mackenzie, Seagull, & Faraj, 2002), commercial aviation (Burke, Wilson, & Salas, 2005; Schulman, 1993), critical infrastructure management (Roe & Schulman, 2008), aerospace (Starbuck & Farjoun, 2005), and offshore platforms (Bea, 2002). Collectively, these organizations have found that they can enhance the efficiency and safety of emergency operations by implementing HRO concepts into their organizational structure and culture.

High-Reliability Organizational Theory in Schools

The implementation of principles from High-Reliability Organizations (HRO) is intended to produce effective responses to thwart potentially disastrous situations the first time, and every time, they occur. HROs are not absent errors, but levy their ability to contain the effects of errors so that they do not escalate into significant failures (Bellamy, Crawford, Marchall, & Coulter, 2005). Reason (2000) described the way HROs work: “Error management has two components: limiting the incidence of dangerous errors and—since this will never be wholly effective—creating systems that are better able to tolerate the occurrence of errors and contain their damaging effects” (p.3).

Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) summarized the principles of HROs, which include: (a) a healthy preoccupation with failure, (b) a reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) a sensitivity to operations, (d) a commitment to resilience, and (e) deferring of critical decisions to those who have the highest level of expertise in the issue at hand. These principles inform and influence one another and supersede the organization (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). Consequently, cyclical processes are built into the HRO framework. The processes include: ongoing monitoring of the current situation for potential failures, facing the “brutal facts” (Collins, p.69) of the situation and reporting them to those who have the knowledge to address the potentially disastrous

situation. Redundancy is built into the process to ensure that there is a failsafe at each point of the cycle. Therefore, three important functions are associated with achieving high reliability: (a) improving normal operations, (b) detecting potential problems, and (c) recovering from those problems (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005).

NCLB has so raised the stakes for failure for both schools and students that high reliability is an important aspect of school success. With the goal of “all students” reaching proficiency by 2014, schools are now challenged to prevent all failures and to close achievement gaps among groups of students, in essence, to ensure high reliability learning for all students. At some level, many of the practices associated with HROs are familiar to educators through many of the recommended best practices in schools (Stringfield & Datnow, 2002).

The HRO framework has been implemented in schools. Reynolds, Stringfield, & Schaeffer (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of a school reform effort in Great Britain. This study showed that high-reliability processes could successfully increase test scores. Stringfield, Reynolds, and Schaffer (2008) analyzed other data from 12 Welsh secondary schools that indicates that four years after the effort was initiated, the results at all sites were positive. Additional quantitative and qualitative data gathered 4 years after the end of the intervention indicate the majority of schools continue using high-reliability principles and continued strong progress.

Summary

This literature review showed the development of accountability and standards-based testing as a result of the evolution of NCLB and the deleterious effects such accountability has on students from high-poverty socioeconomic backgrounds, which characterize chronically low-performing schools. Further, in high-poverty, schools, certain successful practices are common.

These practices align with the correlates of Effective Schools. Since we know what works in schools, we must determine what makes these strategies succeed or fail. Therefore, the High Reliability Organization framework, although not usually applied to education, has elements that may positively impact education's traditional approach to educating students in high-poverty schools that may increase those students' opportunities for academic success. Through the lens of High Reliability Organization theory, this study seeks to determine what it is about how we implement the turnaround strategies that we choose as educators, which makes those strategies succeed or fail.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The increased level of accountability in public schools to meet the demands of NCLB (Rabinowitz, 2001; Anthes, 2002) provided the impetus for this study. The looming threat of punitive sanctions, including school takeover by the state education agency has created a sense of urgency as it relates to school improvement (Chapman, 2002; Hassel & Steiner, 2003; Levin, 2006; Malen & Rice, 2004; Wong & Shen, 2003). However, despite the myriad of ideas promulgated to turnaround chronically low-performing schools, the academic outcomes and results for student performance have been mixed at best. In the Louisiana accountability system, some schools have experienced significant gains while others have remained stagnant or even regressed after turnaround strategies have been implemented. We need to better understand what makes the implementation of turnaround strategies in chronically low-performing schools in Louisiana succeed or fail. In order to determine the causative factors regarding the outcome of turnaround strategies, the methodology used was the qualitative research approach in the form of the comparative case study design.

Specifically, the researcher sought to answer these questions:

RQ1: What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround?

RQ2: What implementation design was used to implement turnaround strategies?

RQ3: How does the implementation design used to implement the turnaround strategies relate to characteristics of High Reliability Organizations (i. e., (a) a healthy preoccupation with failure, (b) a reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) a sensitivity to operations, (d) a commitment to resilience, and (e) deferring of critical decisions to those who have the highest level of expertise in the issue at hand).

RQ4: What factors during implementation contributed to the success or failure of the turnaround strategies?

Through the theoretical lens of High Reliability Organizations (HRO), the researcher examined which characteristics of the HRO framework were present when turnaround strategies were implemented and how those characteristics contributed to the success or failure of the turnaround strategies.

Position of the Researcher

The interpretation of any data inherently involves the biases of the researcher. As a former district-level administrator in a high-poverty school district whose responsibilities included the immediate supervision of chronically low-performing schools, I approach this research with preconceived notions about the use of turnaround strategies in high-poverty schools.

I acquired this experience when during my four-year tenure as a high school assistant principal, the superintendent formed a district-level area of supervision that consisted of the 23 lowest performing schools in the district. In each of these schools, the poverty rate exceeded 75%. Unlike other district –level supervisory areas, which consisted of silos of schools designated as either elementary, middle, or high, this area had within its purview all schools, elementary, middle, and high. I was selected by the superintendent to supervise those 23 lowest-performing schools.

Supported by resources from the Stupski Foundation, which is a private operating foundation whose mission is to improve the life options for children of color and poverty by transforming public educational systems, the district implemented research-based initiatives in four strategic areas: leadership, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and parent and

community engagement. These strategies were based on Edmonds' correlates of Effective Schools. As the immediate supervisor for these schools, I was responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the strategies in each school.

While In this supervisory capacity, I recognized trends among the schools. After implementing the initiatives, a few schools experienced clear, unambiguous growth in student performance while others either remained stagnant or regressed. Further, I noticed that the variation in the subsequent performance of these schools could not be necessarily attributable to the principal's knowledge of instruction or leadership since those that made gains were led by principals with varied professional experience and leadership styles. This observation led me to the inquiry and research of how high-poverty, chronically low-performing schools implement turnaround strategies.

Even though I am currently employed by a school district that has schools which fit the criteria for this study, I have not included any of them in this study for ethical considerations. Instead, I established criteria and utilized statewide school data from the Louisiana Department of Education to purposely select schools not in my district.

As it relates to this study, I am interested only in what makes turnaround strategies effective, not in any particular strategy itself. Specifically, I am seeking to uncover the factors that make these strategies work in the challenging environment of high-poverty schools.

Yet, I admit that my interest is both professional and personal. As a veteran educator who has worked with high-poverty schools, I seek to increase the effectiveness of schools. Too often, educators grasp desperately at the latest innovation in hopes of increasing student achievement. However, as Ron Edmonds (1979) said it best:

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; we already know more than we need to do that; and whether

or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (pp. 22-23).

I am personally outraged at the number of educational reforms enacted that negatively impact the voiceless, least powerful, marginalized segments of our school community. Let us learn how to do that which we already know to do. Only then will we see positive change among the most challenging to educate. In summary, Edmond's sentiment has become the impetus for my study and professional work.

Qualitative Research

This study uses a qualitative research approach in order to develop a theoretical framework for exploring, explaining, and characterizing factors that impact the effectiveness of turnaround strategies that are implemented in high-poverty, chronically low-performing schools. Merriam (1998) states, "Often qualitative studies are undertaken because there is a lack of theory, or because existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon. Thus, qualitative researchers build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained in the field" (p.7). Since the mere implementation of turnaround strategies have failed to produce consistent, positive results in student achievement, it is critical for future studies to first develop strong theoretical foundations that coalesces "the meanings, concepts, definitions, characterizations. . . and descriptions of things" (Berg, 2001, p.3). A qualitative approach is the most effective means to gain a deeper understanding of how turnaround strategies are implemented and to compare various methods of implementation for the purpose of reaching conclusions related to the implementation and its subsequent success or failure.

A qualitative approach is valuable because "qualitative research is designed to inductively build rather than to test concepts, hypotheses, or theories" (Merriam, 1998, p.45). This does not mean that a qualitative study does not utilize existing theory nor does it mean that

data collection occurs without an explicit theoretical framework. In truth, qualitative research begins with a theoretical framework and then uses it as a lens to generate further concepts and theories. It is important to note that “qualitative methods can be extremely systematic and have the ability to be reproduced by subsequent researchers” (Berg, 2001, p.7).

Use of the Case Study Approach

The use of the case study approach is the preferred strategy when the investigator is examining the causes of a particular event or phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The case study approach has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, social work (Gilgun, 1994) and business (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002). During the late 1970s and 1980s, however, Robert Stake (1978), Robert Yin (1981), and Sharon Merriam (1988) advocated using case studies for educational research. For the purpose of this study, the research conforms to the definition of case study offered by Yin (2003): “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” In short, the case study method is used to deliberately investigate contextual conditions based on the belief that those contextual conditions might be significantly related to the phenomenon under study. Further, according to Cresswell (2007), case study researchers may investigate multiple bounded systems, or cases, over time, using multiple sources of information and report a case description and case-based themes. This approach is the multiple case study.

Interviewing

The interview is a common research method used in qualitative research. Interviews can be highly structured, as in the case of fixed response questionnaires, or minimally structured, as in the case of the narrative method (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993; Kleinman, 1988). While many

researchers have described the benefits of qualitative interviewing, Heyink & Tymstra (1993, p. 295) have offered a concise summary that has been adapted into the following list:

- The respondents themselves can raise and suggest important research issues in an interview,
- The interviewer can clarify misunderstandings and probe for deeper meaning.
- The interviewer can ask, or test, emerging hypotheses and research questions immediately in an interview without prior planning.
- The respondent and the interviewer can build a rapport: a relationship based on confidence, security, and mutuality of purpose that can help obtain responses to sensitive questions.
- The interview is a wide-band method, meaning that many themes can be checked for relevance at short notice.
- The interview is particularly appropriate for research into feelings, attitudes, intentions, and motivations of behavior.

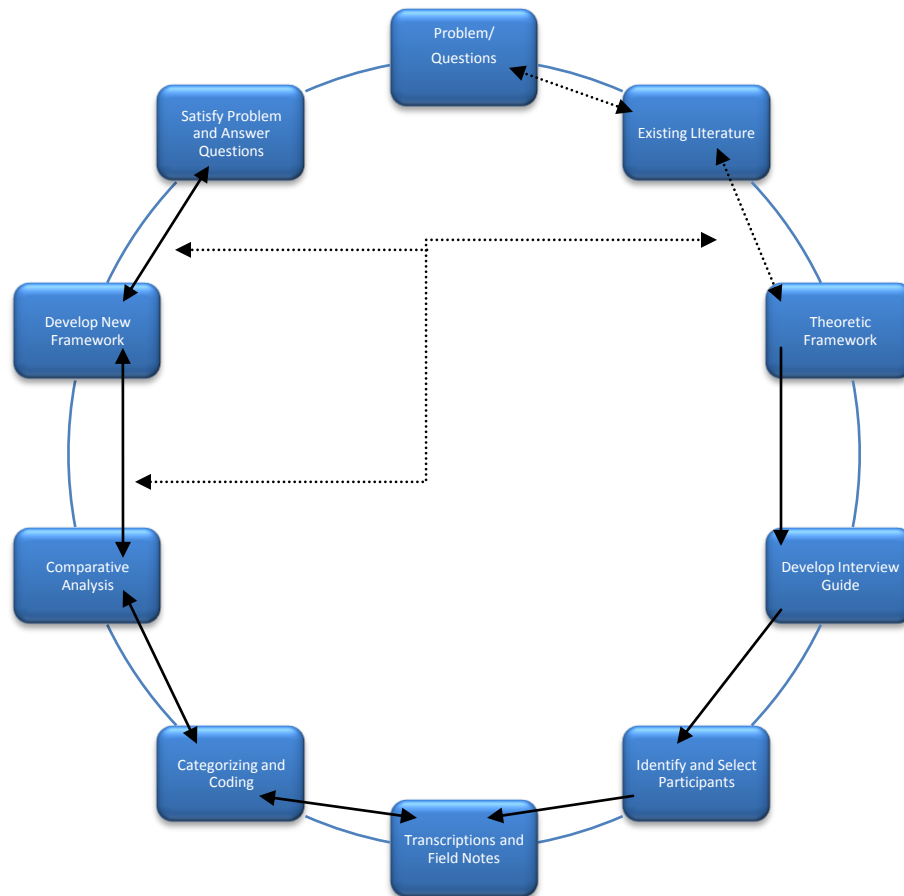
In addition to the benefits of qualitative interviewing, there are also associated difficulties. Interviewers must: (a) be knowledgeable, skilled, and well prepared before entering the field; (b) be adept at building rapport; and (c) know how to efficiently process interview data. Further, difficulties associated with data collection and analysis often result in a qualitative study that is less structured and relatively smaller in sample size than quantitative studies. Another problem occurs when the “cultural bias that both the interviewer and the respondent bring to the interview distorts the data” (Miller, 1991, p. 161). Finally, qualitative research studies and interviews are difficult to replicate by other researchers because, according to Behar (1996), “conversations and interactions in the field cannot be exactly replicated” (p.7).

In this study, the benefits of interviewing out-weigh the disadvantages. A primary reason for using interviewing in this study is to allow the researcher to examine phenomenon, in this case the factors that impact the success or failure of turnaround strategies in high-poverty schools. An interview provides the needed flexibility to probe ideas that emerge during the interview dialogue in order to understand the phenomenon.

The next sections of the methodology explain the design of the study, data collection, data analysis procedures, description of the interview instrument, participant selection, and field notes.

Research Design: Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The researcher employed the case study qualitative research design to investigate the factors that made some school turnaround efforts successful and others fail. The figure below depicts the study's overall design including the sequencing between the data collection and data analysis procedures. The procedures are described in the following sections.



Legend:

- ↓ Procedural direction of methodology. Flow is straightforward, in general.
- ⋮ Comparison and synthesis of data and emerging findings. Flow is back and forth or reflexive.

Figure 3. Diagram indicating the relationship between data collection and data analysis procedures.

Participant Selection

The researcher purposefully selected five elementary schools based on criteria that included 3-year school performance history according to the Louisiana accountability system, socioeconomic status, and special education population to ensure the logic of replication (Yin, 2003). Of the five elementary schools, one did not respond to repeated requests to participate, which resulted in the remaining four. Further, to address ethical considerations regarding

researcher bias and objectivity as it relates to the nature of qualitative study, none of the selected schools is located in the district that employs the researcher.

It is important to note that the sample size is small for several reasons. First, a small sample size allows for longer, more in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview is necessary because the research topic requires probing and reflection. Second, interviewing a small number of persons is reasonable in terms of logistics and scheduling. Given the expectation that the interviews would last up to an hour or more and the transcription, coding, and analysis would last even longer, it seemed necessary to interview only a few key individuals.

Participation Selection Criteria

For the qualitative study, a stratified purposeful sample was used to select schools (Patton, 2002). There were four strata: (1) accountability label, (2) student enrollment, (3) special education population, and (4) percentage of students who eat meal at a free or reduced cost. According to the Louisiana accountability system, all of these schools had earned the performance label of academically unacceptable in 2008. However, by 2010, three of the schools had earned the label of minimal academic growth, which means the school improved at least 0.1 points, but failed to meet its growth target. One school had earned the label of school in decline, denoting a more than -2.5 point decline in the school performance score. Following the implementation of various turnaround strategies, the results are mixed.

Table 1

Longitudinal Performance of Schools Selected for Study

School	Grade Configuration	Baseline SPS 2007	Baseline SPS 2008	Baseline SPS 2009	Growth Label 2010	Baseline SPS 2010	Baseline SPS 2011
Alpha	PK, K-5	58.7	54.3	61	Minimal Academic Growth	65.5	67.1

Table 1 continued

Beta	PK, K-5	52.6	56.5	62.4	Minimal Academic Growth	61.8	64.4
Gamma	PK, K-5	63.3	59.8	62.2	Minimal Academic Growth	64.9	61.3
Delta	PK-K-4	61.1	56.7	60.5	School in Decline ³	58.9	57.3

Note. Louisiana Department of Education School Report Cards, data source.³

Further, these schools were selected because of their similar demographics to one another as it relates to student enrollment, special education population, and free and/or reduced meal price population. The number of students enrolled range from 309-790. The special education population ranges from 7% to 13%. The population of students who pay free or reduced meal prices ranges from 94% to 96%.

Table 2

Demographics of Schools Selected for Study

District	School	Student Enrollment	Special Education Population	Free/Reduced Meal Price Population
A	Alpha	790	13%	95%
B	Beta	293	14%	95%
B	Gamma	328	7%	94%
B	Delta	309	9%	96% ⁴

Note. Louisiana Department of Education. School Report Cards, data source.⁴

The resulting participants in the study consisted of two district-level administrators, four elementary school principals, and four teacher-leaders. Both of the district-level administrators,

³ Louisiana Department of Education. School Report Cards. Retrieved 24 May 2012 from <http://louisianaschools.net/reportcards/>

⁴ Louisiana Department of Education. School Report Cards. Retrieved 15 October 2011 from <http://louisianaschools.net/reportcards/>

one were Caucasian females. The principals consisted of one Caucasian male, one Caucasian female, one African American male and one African American female. Of the participating teacher leaders, two were African American females and the other two were Caucasian females. Wide variance existed between each participant's years of educational experience and the number of years served in the current position or site.

Table 3

Characteristics of Study Participants

Title	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Educational Experience	Years in Current Position/Site
District Leader 1	W	F	40	20
Principal Alpha	W	M	6	3
Teacher Alpha	B	F	24	12
District Leader 2	W	F	25	3
Principal Beta	W	F	23	3
Teacher Beta	W	F	6	3
Principal Gamma	B	M	22	5
Teacher Gamma	B	F	34	2
Principal Delta	B	F	38	11
Teacher Delta	W	F	33	4

Conducting the Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews during the Fall semester 2011 and Spring semester 2012 in the participants' school districts. The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix A) developed from a review of the literature on what works in high-poverty schools and High Reliability Organizations as a basis for asking questions. Similar, though appropriately modified, protocols were used to interview each of the three categories of respondents: a) district-level personnel responsible for direct supervision of each school, b) principals, and c) teachers. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The next section explains the details of the interviews.

Interview scheduling

After identifying prospective participants, the researcher communicated with appropriate district-level personnel. To gain access to the district and school personnel, the researcher made initial telephone contact with the leader of each school district. In one case, that leader was the Superintendent, who made my introduction to the immediate district-level supervisor with whom I needed to speak. That district-level supervisor, in turn, put me in contact with the school principals. In the other case, the leader was the Assistant Superintendent because the district was in the process of selecting a new Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent then completed the interview as the district-level supervisor and permitted me to make contact with the school principal.

The researcher described the study to each participant in the following way: “as part of my Ph.D. program, I am conducting a study of turnaround efforts in high-poverty districts to determine what makes the efforts succeed or fail. Your district fits the criteria of the study. Would you be willing to participate?” Participants were told that their identity would remain anonymous and the results of the research would be reported in a manner that would not allow someone to deduce their identity. Participants were also told that the interview would be digitally recorded in order to ensure that the discussion was transcribed accurately.

All interviews were scheduled by appropriate district-level personnel and at the convenience of the interviewees. The participants selected the time and date for the interview. The researcher complied with the participants’ requests.

Interview Location

Each interview occurred within each participants' work context. Interviews with district-level supervisors took place at the central administration office for the district. Interviews with school principals and their selected teacher leader took place at their respective school sites.

Interview Length, Audio Recording, and Field Notes

Each district-level supervisor, principal, and teacher leader took part in a semi-structured, one-on-one interview that lasted from 36 minutes to 90 minutes, varying according to the responsiveness of the individual interviewee. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document within 72 hours of each interview. As interviews were being conducted, the researcher took field notes. These notes describe the latent content of the interviews and record any issues that appeared to reemerge in each interview.

Informed Consent, Confidentiality, and Rewards

Before each interview began, each participant was asked to read and sign a Human Subjects Informed Consent Form (See Appendix B). Each participant read and signed this form. The form gave the researcher permission to use the transcriptions of the interview in the study with the understanding that each participant's identity was kept confidential. The researcher guaranteed each participants' confidentiality by assigning a pseudonym for use throughout the study. Participants were not given any reward for participation nor were they under any assumption of compensation for participating.

Developing the Interview Guide

An examination of the research problem, existing literature, and research questions resulted in the development of the interview guide (Patton, 2002). An interview guide was used

for each group in this study so that the interviewees were asked the same questions. By utilizing the guide, uniform information was obtained during the interviews. The questions allowed the interviewees to express their views about turnaround efforts and factors concerning the implementation of those efforts in their schools. In this study, the interview guide is semi-structured (Berg, 2001), which means that it utilizes a common set of questions but ultimately relies upon probing and follow-up questions to explore subject areas and obtain understanding.

Semi-structured interview guide

Since limited information exists about the High Reliability Organizational framework in schools, it is difficult to presume all the pertinent questions to ask and therefore problematic to create a completely standardized interview. Thus, the interview instrument was semi-structured, based in part on existing literature and left, in part, open to discover what the literature was missing. A semi-structured interview uses an interview instrument that contains several standard, but broad questions related to the research topic to being a dialogue between interviewer and respondent. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher asks scheduled questions in a systematic and consistent order, but as Berg (2001) explains, “the interviewer is allowed to digress; that is, without leading the subject, the interviewer is expected to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions” (p.71).

Merriam (1998) posits, “Usually, some specific information is desired from all the respondents in a semi-structured interview, in which case there is a highly structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is determined ahead of time” (p.75). For this study, a certain amount of common information regarding school turnaround and its relationship to High Reliability Organizational theory was gathered to allow for comparing

participant responses. The questions formed the scheduled interview questions asked of every participant (figure 4 below). However, as noted previously, researchers have limited exploration about the subject of this study and therefore many unscheduled questions and probing occurred to allow for exploring unforeseen subject areas. Some necessary re-phrasing of the types of preexisting literature was also needed in order to elicit content-specific responses from participants. Below is a sample of the interview guide followed by the rationale underlying each scheduled question.

Interview Protocol
<p>What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround? <i>(e.g., standards, test, curriculum, reconstitution, charter management)</i></p> <p>How were the turnaround strategies implemented? <i>What specific steps were taken to put these strategies in place?</i></p> <p>What factors during implementation made the strategies succeed or fail?</p> <p>How much teacher leadership is there in the district/school? <i>What form does teacher leadership take?</i> <i>How does teachers' expertise influence the academic plans/progress for individual students?</i></p> <p>What data is included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing? <i>In what format do these discussions take place?</i> <i>How often are these discussions held?</i> <i>With whom are the findings of these discussions shared?</i></p> <p>How does the district/school respond to indicators that students are in jeopardy of failing? <i>(e.g., attendance, behavior, course grades)</i></p> <p>What early warning indicators do you monitor to identify students who are at risk of failing? <i>How deeply does the communication concerning student performance permeate the school?</i></p> <p>How is professional development implemented at the school? <i>Are teachers given the freedom to determine, develop, and carry out professional development as they deem appropriate?</i> <i>If so, what is the basis for their selection?</i> <i>If not, why not?</i></p>

Figure 4. The semi-structured interview guide. Scheduled questions are in boldface type and questions in italics are typical probes that emerged during the interviews and posed on a consistent basis. Depending on subject responses, additional questions and probes were used.

Standard Interview Questions and Probes

The following section explains the rationale behind each standard interview question that specifically corresponds to one of the four research questions in this study. Six scheduled questions derived from existing literature on school turnaround and High Reliability Organizations. The other questions elicited background information to gain insight into not only the school or district, but also the interviewee's perception of them as well. Specifically, those questions allowed district-level leaders, principals, and teachers to provide rich and relevant information about their experiences at a high poverty, low-performing school. The general purpose of each question was to initiate a dialogue so that the researcher could probe the respondent with follow-up questions to discover deeper meaning. Probing includes a series of follow-up questions that occur after asking each major question. Determining the follow-up questions was a constructive process built within the course of the interview dialogue. The researcher made field notes in a notebook to help organize and monitor the use of follow-up questions and probing. Thus, the researcher became more adept at choosing follow-up questions in parallel with becoming more skilled at listening, note-taking, and anticipating responses. The table below shows the relationship between each scheduled question and the desired outcome of its response.

Table 4

The Relationship Between Interview Questions and Their Relationship to the Study

Interview Question	Purpose	Relationship to Study
What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround?	To identify common themes perceived as turnaround strategies	Research question 1

Table 4 continued

Interview Question	Purpose	Relationship to Study
What factors during implementation made the strategies succeed or fail? How does the student population impact your implementation of turnaround strategies?	To identify common themes of perceived factors concerning the success or failure of the strategies	Research question 4
How much teacher leadership is there in the district/school?	To determine the existence and extent of deference to expertise	Research question 3
What data is included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing?	To determine how healthy preoccupation with failure is operationalized	Research question 3
How does the district/school respond to indicators that students are in jeopardy of failing?	To determine the existence and extent of reluctance to simplify interpretations	Research question 3
What early warning indicators do you monitor to identify students who are at risk of failing?	To determine the organization's sensitivity to operations and how it is formalized	Research question 3
How is professional development implemented at the school?	To determine the organization's commitment to resilience and how it is formalized	Research question 3

Questions 1-3

Scheduled Questions:

- Tell me about the student population in your district.
- What is particularly challenging about educating this student population?
- Do you feel equipped to deal with this student population?

Questions 1 through 3 elicit a basic characterization of the students in the district/school as the interviewee perceives them. This characterization is important because it provides contextual information regarding a range of factors that may influence the implementation of

turnaround strategies. In addition, these questions were useful as introductory questions because they were flexible and non-leading, allowing for a wide-range of ways to begin the interview dialogue and build rapport with the participant.

Questions 4 -7

Scheduled Questions:

- What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround?
- How were the turnaround strategies implemented?
- What factors during implementation made the strategies succeed or fail?
- How does the student population impact particularly your implementation of these turnaround strategies?

Question 4 provides specificity to the interview questions by focusing on turnaround strategies. This is important because whether there are consistent themes concerning the identification of strategies among the various interviewees (district-leader, principal, teacher) may be a determinant of the existence of turnaround strategies as well as an informal measure of their effectiveness. Question 5 is a means to determine whether the implementation of the turnaround strategies was systemic and systematic. Carroll, Patterson, Wood, Booth, Rick, and Balain (2007) posit that implementation fidelity is an important source of variation affecting the credibility, utility, of research. In short, faulty implementation may be a factor in the effectiveness of turnaround strategies. Therefore, question 6 probes for the interviewee's perception of the success of the strategies. It allows the interviewees to identify factors they deem significant to the success or failure of the strategies. Again, the researcher sought for common themes among the participants. Question 7 prompts the participant to consider more implementation factors that may affect the effectiveness of the strategies.

Questions 8-12

Scheduled Questions:

- How much teacher leadership is there in the district?
- What data is included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing?
- How does the district respond to indicators that students are in jeopardy of failing?
- What early warning indicators do you monitor to identify students who are at risk of failing?
- How is professional development implemented at the school?

In general, questions 8-12 relate to the characteristics of High Reliability Organizations.

Question 8 is created on the premise that the teacher is the expert in the education of students.

This premise is supported by researchers Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) and Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) who posit that the teacher is the most important external factor in student achievement. This question elicits responses concerning the deference to teachers' expertise as it relates to student achievement. Question 9 examines the healthy preoccupation with failure in a school context, meaning the formalized, continuous examination of student achievement data and any other data that may provide insight into student performance. The purpose of question 10 is to frame a discussion of the reluctance to simplify interpretations. Responding to this question, interviewees explain the process, individualized by student, which the school undergoes to address the indicators that students may fail. Question 11, which addresses sensitivity to operations, delves into the formalized discussion of early warning indicators of student failure, and the permeation of communication to address those

indicators throughout the school. The purpose of question 12 is to determine how the district/school fosters a culture of learning for their teachers (experts) such that they can efficaciously act with informed audacity to address student needs.

Data Sources/Instruments/Measures

Qualitative data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included transcripts of digitally recorded interviews with the district-level supervisor, principal, and selected teacher leaders at each school from among those who agreed in writing to be interviewed.

For the purpose of triangulation, secondary data were obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education, from official school documents, and field notes made during visits by the researcher to the schools.

Data Collection

The data was collected in three phases:

1. Phase one consisted of securing permission from each participating school district to conduct the study. After receiving permission from each parish school system, permission to conduct the study was obtained from each district-level leader, principal, and teacher leader.
2. Phase two consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews of district-level leaders, principals, and teacher leaders. During the interview, probing questions were asked based upon the responses of interviewees. Phase three consisted of reviewing transcripts with each participant. Meeting with the participants, conversing by telephone, and communicating through electronic mail further clarified responses as necessary.

3. Further, throughout the interview process, the researcher maintained observational and reflective notes about the school environment and information gained. These notes served as additional data for analysis.

Researcher as Instrument of Analysis

It is important to mention that when analyzing qualitative research, particularly when using open-coding, the researcher him or herself is the primary instrument of analysis. Unlike studies where physical instruments like a thermometer, for example, are used, in interviews, the researcher performs the function of the instrument, identifying issues and concepts, and measuring their relative value. The benefit of the researcher as an instrument of analysis is that the researcher has the flexibility to modify his or her approach as needed and can detect latent content inherent in the subjects. The drawback of using the researcher as the instrument of analysis is that the researcher often lacks the same precision and objectivity that a physical instrument or test might afford. As the instrument of analysis, the researcher must recognize his or her biases and attempt to mitigate them in order to improve the reliability and validity of the study findings.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as: “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the context of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278); “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000, p.2); and “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p.

453). These three definitions illustrate that qualitative data analysis emphasizes an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts, allowing researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.

Qualitative data analysis involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation (Cresswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Cresswell (2007) described a process in which the researcher begins with” open coding, which is coding the data for its major categories of information. From this coding, axial coding emerges in which the researcher identifies one open coding category to focus on, which is called “core phenomenon, and then goes back to the data and create categories around this core phenomenon” (p. 64).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) described an inductive approach to qualitative data analysis in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. Then, during data analysis, the researchers immerse themselves in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data. The purpose of this approach, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), is to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory.

Throughout the data analysis process, interview transcripts, field notes, and information from the Louisiana Department of Education were examined repeatedly for emerging themes and areas for further examination. Emerging themes informed the addition of interview questions and the refinement of existing questions. Following the data collection phase, the formal coding process began.

Coding

Coding refers to the process of naming or labeling things, categories, and properties (Merriam, 1998). Coding procedures range from systematic and formal to intuitive and informal

(Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Seidman, 1998). This study adopts a modified version of the coding process, derived from the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Silverman (1991). The next sections describe the steps in the data analysis process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Open coding

Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), open coding is the “analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). The researcher reads each line, sentence, and paragraph in search of the answer to the repeated questions: “What is this about?” and “What is being referenced here?” (Silverman, 1991).

The first step in open coding is to identify concepts. Identifying concepts means to attribute labels to the interview data by distinguishing common properties. The researcher gave careful attention to the vocabulary and phrasing respondents used. For example, in this study, one concept that became apparent concerned strategies used for school turnaround. The concept of school turnaround strategies incorporates many properties. By identifying related properties in the interviews and combining them, a concept emerges.

Table 5

Examples of Open-Coding

SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGIES (Concept)		
World Language Academy (DL1: p1.)	Reconstitution (PA: p.7)	Reconstitution (TA: p.2)
Reconstitution (DL1: p.5)	Hired leadership team (PA: p.8)	Changed instructional staff (TA: p.3)
Changed administration (DL1: p.6)	Replaced teaching staff (PA: p.7)	District programs (TA: p.4)

Table 5 continued

SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGIES (Concept)		
Principal hired staff (DL1: p.7)	Additional staff (PA: p.9)	Additional resources (TA: p.5)
Deferred other strategies to principal (DL1: p.7)	Use of data (PA: p.3)	Increased instructional day (TA: p.6)
	Revamp SBLC process (PA: p.5)	District assistance team (TA: p.8)
		Response to Intervention process (TA: p.12)
		Accountability (TA: p.2)
		Progress monitoring (TA: p.6)
		Curriculum (TA: p.6)
		Clear expectations for teachers and students (TA: p.7)

The concept in this example, school turnaround strategies, is at the top of the list followed by related properties. Reference codes like PA :p.1, for example, refer to the interviewee's school, in this case Alpha; the interviewee's position, DL for district leader, P for principal, and T for teacher; and the transcription page.

After identifying, describing, and organizing multiple concepts, the next step is to create sets of categories. A category shows how concepts are interrelated by tying together several concepts to provide a stronger organization for presenting research findings. Essentially, categories consist of related concepts that combine to create a larger framework. For example, during this step of coding, it became clear that the properties within the concept of school turnaround strategies could be combined into four broad categories (Table 5). This conclusion was based on an application of the literature of effective schools to what emerged in the interview data. Thus, the researcher created a single APPROACH category that includes all the concepts and their properties relating to the SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGIES category. Finally, a single word processing file organizes and stores all the information pertaining to the school turnaround strategies category for future analysis.

Table 6

Examples of Category Formulation

APPROACH (Category)	
Reconstitution Leadership Instructional Staff	Additional resources from the district Data informed decision making Data informed instruction

The properties within the concept of school turnaround strategies combine to form a single category called APPROACH. Categories are derived from interview excerpts pertaining to each concept and describe the properties and characteristics of the category entitled SCHOOL TURNAROUND STRATEGIES.

Axial Coding

Axial coding refers to the formation of sub-categories from the categories developed during open-coding and then relating the properties of sub-categories to each other, via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. Rather than providing a general explanation for a phenomenon, sub-categories attempt to answer more specific, basic questions about that phenomenon such as what, where, when, and how. The purpose of the sub-categories is to create a dense explanation of the relationships of data components around the axis of a category. Strauss and Corbin (1988) emphasize that during axial coding an organizational scheme should develop.

To simplify this process, rather than look for varying relationships, grounded theorists emphasize causal relationships, and fit things into a basic frame of generic relationships. The frame consists of the following items (Strauss and Corbin, 1998):

Table 7

Terms used to explain a category

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Concept or phenomenon	In open coding, it is sometimes the outcome of interest, or it can be the subject

Table 7 continued

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Conditions and properties	A set of events or elements and their properties that cause or effect the phenomenon
Action strategies	The purposeful activities that agents perform in response to the phenomenon and intervening conditions
Consequences	These are the consequences of the action strategies, intended and unintended

As the researcher explains each item, a greater understanding of the category develops.

Each item in the chart helps to further explain and describe a category. Together, they begin to tell a story.

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the process of taking the categories and their respective subcategories developed through open and axial coding, refining and integrating them to create a single theoretical framework. The initial step in creating the theoretical framework is to select a central category. The theoretical framework that emerged in this study consists of a central or core category consisting of turnaround strategies in chronically low-performing, high poverty schools and the presence of characteristics of High Reliability Organizations during the implementation of the strategies. The selective coding process included: determining a logical flow between categories and subcategories, developing the properties and dimensions of each category and subcategory, trimming excess ideas that do not fit well within the core category or theoretical framework; and reviewing each interview, official school document, and field notes to see how they relate to the core category and add to emergent patterns.

The process was accomplished by re-reading the interview transcripts, official school documents, and field notes and through the writing process itself. Writing was ongoing and categories were constantly compared to one another and eventually against the basic concepts of

school turnaround strategies and characteristics of High Reliability Organizations (HROs). To determine the causal relationship of implementing the turnaround strategies and their resulting success or failure to increase student achievement, the researcher compared the degree of existence of the characteristics of HROs among the schools that showed clear, unambiguous growth, those that remained stagnant, and those that declined. The degree of existence of the characteristics of HROs was determined by the interviews with the district leaders, principals, and teachers, and also by official school/district documents and field notes and measured using a Likert-scale.

However, this research was not limited to using only the respondents' own language and concepts to describe their perspectives. In accordance with Foucault's notion of the "technologies of the self," which referred to "specific practices by which subjects constitute themselves within and through systems of power, and which often seem to be either 'natural' or imposed from above," the researcher will use language, concepts, and critical analysis that may exceed respondents' own explicit self-reflection, to document their understanding of what makes school turnaround efforts succeed or fail.

Further, contrast and componential analyses (Spradley, 1979) were performed to distinguish the experiences of each participant as a (1) district-level leader, (2) principal, and (3) teacher leader.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness describes the extent to which a researcher can persuade an audience that the findings are credible. The construct developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) consists of four criteria to determine trustworthiness to ensure the credibility of qualitative research: credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were used to demonstrate the truth value of the qualitative research of this study.

Credibility

Credibility in research is determined by the rigorous standards used to collect and analyze data. Standards were set and followed to assure credibility of the fieldwork. Evidence for the study was gathered at four school sites within the state of Louisiana. Observations and interviews during the course of the study provided the impetus for gathering data from which certain themes emerged. Scheduling interviews in a structured format provided data that was obtained in a recurring manner increasing the reliability of the information. Further, triangulation (Patton, 2002) was used to give credibility to this study. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data-collection methods, data sources, and analysts to validate the qualitative research findings (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996). Data were collected from open-ended questions asked of district-level administrators, principals, and teacher leaders who were employed in high-poverty, chronically low-performing schools. In addition to the interviews, artifacts provided by the interviewees and the field notes of the researcher were collected.

Transferability

Transferability refers to whether the findings from a study can be used in another context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Transferability is most often established in a qualitative study through the use of thick description (Geertz, 1973). Thick descriptions of interpretations and conclusions include detailed description of all information of the study, including the settings, methods of data collection, findings, and conclusion. Future readers, including but not limited to educators or researchers will determine the level of transferability of this study to their own settings.

Dependability and Confirmability

The researcher made every effort to interpret the data collected in an objective manner. Notes gathered during the observations and interviews were shared with the participants for comments and feedback at the conclusion of the data analysis. The researcher attempted to eliminate any personal opinions, which enhanced the trustworthiness of the data, and in so doing, established confirmability.

Limitations of the Study

Typical of case studies involving a small number of sites, the findings from these four cases are intended to be descriptive and informative, but not necessarily transferable to other contexts. Causal-comparative research is limited in establishing causality on the basis of the collected data (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). In this study, limitations on generalizability include, but are not limited to, particular site conditions such as: principal leadership, teacher quality, and availability of resources.

Summary

The researcher conducted an investigation to determine the factors during the implementation of turnaround strategies that caused the strategies either to succeed or to fail. The research questions in this study were addressed by qualitative methods. The qualitative methods consisted of in-depth, open-ended interviews with district-level administrators, principals, and teacher leaders in high-poverty, chronically low-performing schools. Constant comparative methods by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used to analyze the interviews for this study. Contrast and componential analyses (Spradley, 1979) were performed to distinguish the experiences of each participant as a (1) district-level administrator,

(2) principal, and (3) teacher leader. An inductive approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) was used to validate or extend the conceptual framework or theory.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of turnaround strategies in chronically low-performing and high poverty schools to determine the factors that caused the strategies either to succeed or to fail. To do this, the researcher used the characteristics of High Reliability Organizations to probe the lived experiences of principals, teachers, and district leaders in three types of chronically low-performing schools: (a) schools that have shown clear and unambiguous growth, (b) schools that have remained stagnant and (c) schools that have regressed. The schools were selected because they each had a performance label of academically unacceptable in 2008. Further, each school had similar student enrollments, special education populations, and populations of students who eat meals at either free or reduced prices.

Table 8

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations Explained

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations	Characterized by
Deference to expertise	Higher-level decision-making enabled at the line level
Healthy preoccupation with failure	Constant awareness of potential failure/accident, which leads to (1) frequent self- analysis and situational awareness, (2) continuous improvement of processes, (3) redundant communication systems
Reluctance to simplify interpretations	Each event examined within its current context, free of preconceived assumptions
Sensitivity to operations	Laser-like attention to daily operations
Commitment to resilience	Frequent training is valued to encourage innovation and increase adaptation expertise so that personnel can effectively deal with unplanned events

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative analyses of the interview responses. In addition to the interviews, data were collected from field notes and artifacts provided by each participating school.

Descriptive Data

In this study, participants are identified by their school pseudonym and title. Principals are designated as Principal Alpha (PA), Principal Beta (PB), Principal Gamma (PG), and Principal Delta (PD). Teachers are designated as Teacher Alpha (AT), Teacher Beta (TB), Teacher Gamma (TG), and Teacher Delta (TD). The two district-level administrators are assigned DL1 and DL2.

Case Study 1: Alpha Elementary School

Contextual Background

Upon approaching Alpha Elementary School during dismissal, visitors observe students organized into groups based on their assigned bus. These students interact freely with one another as their teacher monitors their behavior. At regular intervals, a voice rings over the loudspeaker announcing the bus currently being loaded. Students who have not yet arrived at the designated loading area rush to get there. Several adults remind the students to be careful as they make their way hurriedly to the bus. Inside the building, students proceed toward the exit in a single file line. The principal stands in the middle of the foyer area, firmly shaking the hand of each passing student as he exchanges polite salutations such as “Goodbye,” or “Have a nice evening,” with each student. As parents arrive, the principal stops to greet them as well before they continue to the office to pick up their children. Inside the office, a clerk monitors a radio as the voice on the opposite end informs her of bus departures and arrivals. The clerk notes the changes on the computer, which is immediately projected onto a television screen above her

desk. Expectations and rules for the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program at Alpha are clearly visible.

Teacher Alpha described the student population as “at-risk” and “transient.” According to TA, the majority of Alpha’s students is from the community and can be characterized by the ills of generational poverty. For example, most students come from families in which high school is the highest educational level attained, and DL1 observed that parental involvement is an ongoing challenge.

Principal Alpha expressed similar sentiments. He noted, “One of the things that makes this a challenging population is the kinds of activities that take place in a public housing development, typically have a tendency to spill over into the school. So the messy behavior, the streetwiseness [sic], the tough façade that children have to put on in order to survive comes into the school building.” He added, “We have to take care of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs before we can ever hope to educate them. “

Alpha has a total of 795 students enrolled. 95.7% of the students are eligible for the federal free/reduced meal program. Further, 12.3% of the students are classified as Students with Disabilities.

School Performance

Every year since the 2007-2008 school year, the school performance score at Alpha Elementary has increased. In the school sessions from 2007-2008 through 2010-2011, Alpha grew an atypical 12.8 points on the school performance accountability scale, of which 90% of the points are determined by students’ performance on standardized tests, and the other 10% are determined by the student attendance rate.

Turnaround Strategy

Prior to the start of the 2008-2009 school year, the school district developed and implemented a reconstitution plan. Reconstitution is an education reform strategy that involves replacing the staff of a low-performing school, including the principal, teachers, and support personnel (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss 2010). DL1 reported that the principal selected for Alpha had the opportunity to hire his own assistant principal and to interview and select his own staff. Alpha Teacher noted that about 90% of the instructional staff was replaced as a result of reconstitution. Alpha Principal, however, stated that he maintained about 15% of the staff, but the people retained were support staff.

Implementation of the Turnaround Strategy

The district selected reconstitution as a measure to effect turnaround. DL1 reported that the reconstitution “was not state-initiated.” In essence, the school district pre-empted the state by initiating reconstitution on its own. DL1 shared that officials from the Louisiana Department of Education questioned the district’s decision to reconstitute prior to being mandated, and the district posited that this Alpha model would become a pilot for other schools in the district.

DL1 explained that prior to actually implementing reconstitution, the district reached out to the community and enlisted various organizations (i.e., 100 Black Men, Vocational Education Training [VETA]) for support. Some went “door-to-door” to the homes of affected students to explain the purpose of reconstitution and the potential for its positive impact on the students. Community partners such as VETA volunteered to provide adult education classes to prepare parents for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) or other technical training at Alpha.

Principal Alpha explained that he implemented the turnaround strategy “one piece at a time.” He spent year one working on the culture, year two focused on professional development, and year three focused on using data effectively.

Teacher Alpha suggested that the principal’s approach to leadership helped with the implementation of the strategies. She describes him as being actively involved in meetings with instructional staff. She remarked, “I find he’s one of the first principals that come to every meeting, so he plays more of a bigger part into the process because he’s there, and he wants to know ‘What is the child doing? What is the teacher doing?’” Also, she observed that the principal holds everyone accountable to his expectations and provided the resources for those expectations to be met.

Based on these interviews, the researcher concluded that the actual plan for reconstitution was developed at the district-level. The district appealed to community groups to garner support within the school community for the plan. After that, district-level personnel interviewed and selected the principal for Alpha. Then, the principal for Alpha interviewed and selected his entire staff.

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

Deference to expertise

All interviewees: DL1, PA, and TA referred to school-based teacher leadership teams. DL1 noted, “Every school in our district is required to have teacher leadership team so that the principal can collaborate with teachers.” However, she stated also:

You’re probably going to hear [from the teachers] that [the district] needs to involve us [teachers] more in the decision making at the district-level. And I think that’s probably true. But, at the school level, they should have it [collaboration between principal and teachers]. When you go from school to school, the responsibility is going to be different. But we have trained leadership teams. We had professional development for them.

In short, the district expects each school to have a teacher leadership team; however, the responsibilities of each team vary by school.

Principal Alpha explained the role and function of the two school-based leadership teams at Alpha: the leadership team and the faculty council. The leadership team consists of all persons in administrative positions at the school with whom he collaborates to “chart the course” of the school. These persons are “sworn to confidence” since they must discuss sensitive issues, even related to personnel. The faculty council is a venue to include the faculty voice in the direction of the school. The faculty council is “a body that is made of elected representatives from the various divisions of the school.” The principal is the only administrator who meets with the faculty council. During this monthly meeting, members of the council share faculty concerns without identifying the specific source of the concern. The principal either addresses the concerns during that meeting, or if necessary, reports at the next council meeting. This group allows the voice of teachers to be heard on day-to-day school operations as well as long-term planning regarding school structure and operation.

Teacher Alpha (TA) described the faculty council similarly. She explained:

At each grade level, the teachers at that grade level voted for a teacher to be their teacher leader. So, once a month the faculty council meets with administration and at that time any teacher in that grade level, if they have any concerns or any needs or wants, they let their faculty council leader know and they present it.

TA elaborated that when the leadership team meets, the principal shares with them the concerns raised at faculty council. As a leadership team, they may develop resolutions or they may decide that the teachers themselves should develop a resolution. This process allows teachers to provide input into what is put into practice.

At Alpha, not only do teachers have voice concerning school operations, they also have a clear voice in the academic plans/progress for individual students. Principal Alpha described the

way he revamped the traditional school improvement process, which he described as “lacking.” Weekly, grade-level teachers meet collaboratively to review student data. During that meeting, teachers raise concerns about student progress.

Teacher Alpha further explained that teachers are expected to discuss instruction, whether it is focused on content or strategies. The content taught in the core area is shared with ancillary teachers, such as the art, music, and physical education teachers, by means of a “focus agenda,” which lists each topic in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Ancillary teachers are expected to integrate these topics into their content.

Healthy preoccupation with failure

The data discussed concerning students who are found to be at risk of failing fall into three categories: assessment, behavior, and attendance. The district leader (DL1), Principal Alpha (PA), and Teacher Alpha (TA) all mentioned this data as the basis for instructional decision-making.

Table 9

Summary of Responses from District Leader 1, Principal Alpha, and Teacher Alpha

	Assessment	Behavior	Attendance
DL1	Benchmark assessments State assessments (i.e., iLEAP, LEAP)	discipline	Daily rate of attendance Drop-out rate Truancy
PA	Formative assessments (i.e., DIBELS, DRA) Benchmark assessments State assessments	discipline	Daily rate of attendance
TA	Formative assessments (i.e., DIBELS, STAR reading and math, MCOP, MCAP)	discipline	Daily rate of attendance

DL1 reported that the data analysis is currently done manually since the district does not have an electronic software system that will automatically alert the administrator when a student is

showing signs of trouble. She reports that every school has a data room and there is a data room at the district office. Professional development has been provided to principals on how to interpret and use the data.

PA and TA explained that at Alpha, teachers meet by grade-level on a weekly basis to discuss the data. This is part of the collaborative planning process. For the data meeting, teachers meet in the data room, which the school maintains. In the data room, large charts are posted along the wall, with each chart representing a specific teacher's class. On each chart, the name of every student in that teacher's class is written on a slip of paper. The names are grouped by performance bands that mirror the performance bands for the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP): advanced, mastery, basic, approaching basic, and unsatisfactory.

Principal Alpha elaborated:

. . .the walls are lined with all the data, student by student and how they're performing, in each of the subject areas in each of the bands. So, when the results come back, the teachers have to go and move the students. So they physically see this child's progressing; this child's not. To give it to them on a piece of paper is not quite as dramatic as having to go to that room and pull it up and move their name.

Reluctance to simplify interpretations

After reviewing the assessment, behavior, and attendance data in the weekly collaborative grade-level meetings, Principal Alpha and Teacher Alpha both describe an immediate process that addresses the needs of the student, which in essence, accelerates the School Building Level Committee (SBLC) process. According to a district artifact entitled "School Building Level Committee," the purpose of the SBLC is "to ensure that each individual student is provided the opportunity to receive the best instruction available to meet his/her needs" (p. 82). The SBLC committee is comprised of the following school-based personnel: one regular education teacher, one administrator, one special education teacher, and one counselor.

The chairperson of the committee is either elected by the faculty or appointed by the principal to the position.

The SBLC process is initiated when a teacher refers a student to the committee by completing the “Initial Referral” sheet. Then, the SBLC schedules the meeting with the teacher and parent. The committee decides whether: interventions should be implemented and documented, other referrals should be made, a 504 evaluation should be conducted, or any other data is needed. If the committee decides that interventions are needed, the committee develops a response to intervention plan. With this plan, students are provided with additional small group instructional time for eight weeks. After that time, the student’s progress is re-evaluated. The student may: be dismissed from the interventions to continue in the general curriculum, continue the interventions with ongoing monitoring, or continue with increased instructional time adding one-on-one instruction to the current small group instruction.

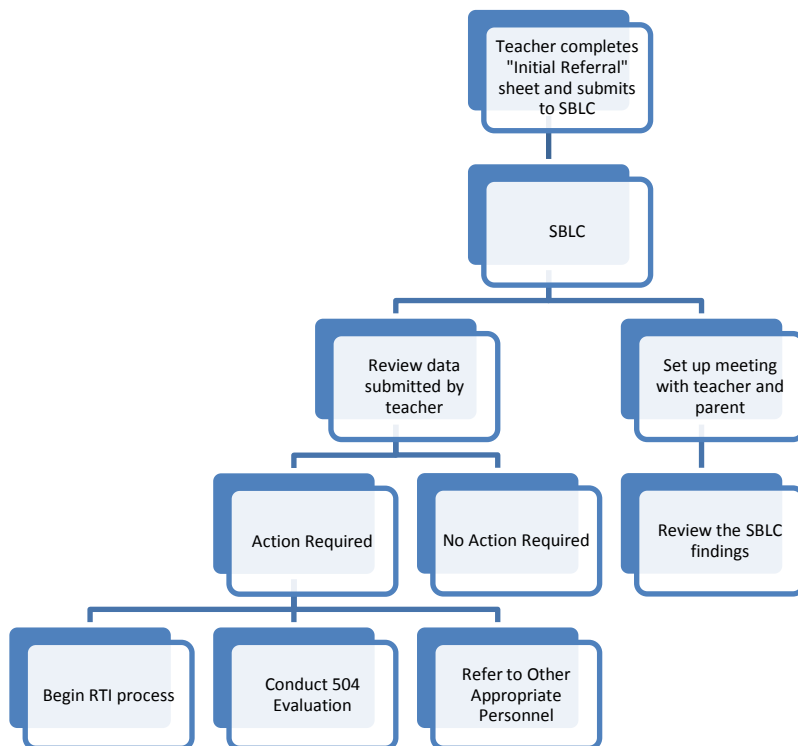


Figure 5: The SBLC process from formal initiation to completion.

Principal Alpha noted that the traditional School Building Level Committee process may take an inordinate amount of time to initiate and execute. Therefore, he modified the process so that students receive interventions immediately even before the formal process takes place. This process, according to PA, takes place for every child who demonstrates an academic, behavioral, or social deficiency.

Sensitivity to operations

District Leader 1, Principal Alpha, and Teacher Alpha all identified assessment, behavioral, and attendance data as early warning indicators to identify whether students are at risk of failing. PA and TA explained that the data gathered concerning these students is shared with school and district-level personnel who have the capacity to provide assistance to the student. PA described “wraparound services” that the school can provide such as the services of: a health clinic, school nurse, social workers, and small group facilitators. TA identified a reading facilitator, reading coach, math coach, and instructional coach as additional resources to the school with whom student data is shared.

Commitment to resilience

District Leader 1, Principal Alpha, and Teacher Alpha concurred that professional development is initiated from three sources: district-prescribed, school-based, and teacher-selected. DL1 stated, “The philosophy of the district is job-embedded professional development.” As the district initiates strategies, it mandates coordinating professional development. She admitted:

They [teachers] don’t always leave the professional development and incorporate it in the classrooms. . . . So, we have to monitor and make sure there’s follow through. . . . Now the principals, particularly if it’s a district initiative, has to attend with their teachers. That way, they know what to look for [when monitoring].

However, DL1 proffered, “A lot of this [professional development] is initiated at the school level based upon the school needs.”

Principal Alpha explained that teachers are surveyed about their professional development needs. They fill out an application and the leadership team reviews it and selects the persons who may attend. After the professional development, teachers must do a post-conference report in which they share resulting strategies with the rest of the faculty. PA noted, also: “Some things are implemented from the administrative level due to a trend being noticed from the walkthroughs that professional development is needed in a certain area or areas.”

Teacher Alpha concurred with Principal Alpha. She added that some professional development is provided from within the staff itself such that all professional development does not occur away from the campus.

Factors Contributing to the Outcome at Alpha

No singular themes emerged during the interviews with District Leader 1 (DL1), Principal Alpha (PA), or Teacher Alpha (TA) regarding the success of the turnaround strategy utilized at Alpha. Each interviewee attributed the success of Alpha to varying factors.

DL1 attributed the success to school leadership, the principal. She explained the district’s deference to this principal’s expertise: “It’s like, you’re the administrator; you do what you think is best.” This statement means that the district allows this principal the autonomy to implement strategies and programs according to his professional knowledge. This confidence in his leadership is based on the principal’s espoused philosophy. According to DL1:

. . . his philosophy is that the culture [at the school] had to change. . . . And I think when he hired the staff, he hired people that could buy into his philosophy. And I really think that made a huge difference.

As part of the culture change, DL1 explained that Principal Alpha engaged the community in which the school is located by welcoming parents. DL1 explained:

If you walk with him in the hall, if there's a parent he normally stops and talks to them. You don't always see that with principals, you know, they're so busy going about their business, but he's very welcoming.

Further, DL1 asserted that Principal Alpha himself participates in events that are significant to the community to effect culture change. DL1 revealed, "He stayed in town this weekend because he also has an apartment in New Orleans and he goes there on weekends. But, it was the black history parade and he wanted to be there with his students."

Principal Alpha attributed the success of Alpha to his team. According to PA, he equipped his team to do their job by providing appropriate professional development, he has enabled them to do their jobs by allowing their voice and expertise in the instructional process as well as daily school operations, and he expects them to do their job well. PA models his expectations for his staff:

I never ask of anyone what I myself wouldn't do. So I'm typically one of the first people to arrive in the morning and most often the last one to leave in the afternoon. And if I'm in the cafeteria and there's a spill and I should be able to grab that mop. So, it's very important for them to see me as one of them, and I've said this at staff meetings, and I so sincerely mean it.

In addition, PA expressed deference to expertise on the school campus:

The most important people on this campus, next to the children, are the teachers. The rest of us, myself included, are support staff. So our job is to support the teachers. And if a teacher says [while] I'm walking down the hall, 'I didn't make enough copies. Can you get me some copies?' Whatever I'm doing is second in importance to that. Get that teacher what she needs to do her job in the classroom.

PA asserts that consistency was a factor in the growth of Alpha. He posited:

I really think that almost every packaged program out there would work. You just have to check the research. You know, get a real good research-based program. Train your people really well. Implement it with fidelity and continue to just stay after it and after it and after it.

Teacher Alpha attributed the growth at Alpha to the framework of the reconstitution. Alpha received additional resources from the district: personnel, the capacity to provide extended instructional time, and weekly classroom support.

School-based strategies TA attributed to the growth include: data-based instruction, which is structured such that teachers and students take ownership of their performance data; the resulting culture of accountability; and faculty buy-in.

Summary of Findings at Alpha

Alpha, a school that has experienced clear, unambiguous growth in its school performance score, instituted the reconstitution model as its turnaround strategy. As part of the reconstitution model, Principal Alpha created a process that engenders deference to expertise. The voices of teachers are heard through the faculty council, which is a standing committee of peer-selected teachers to meet with the principal on matters concerning school operations. In matters of instruction, the accelerated school building level committee process (SBLC), which is teacher driven, determines the academic remediation or acceleration a student will receive. Further, the district leader stated that the principal has autonomy to make instructional decisions for Alpha. In Alpha, a healthy preoccupation with failure is a clear theme among the three interviewees: district leader, principal, and teacher, who all concurred that the data used for instructional decision making consists of assessment, behavior, and attendance. This data is discussed weekly by teachers, who develop targeted assistance plans for students. The reluctance to simplify interpretations is shown by the teachers' treatment of every student data set as unique. Alpha demonstrates sensitivity to operations by involving internal and external resources to assist the students as needed. The data is shared among those who have the capacity

to address the need. Finally, a commitment to resilience is evident by the continued professional development provided to teachers, whether self-selected or school- or district-mandated.

Case Study 2: Beta Elementary School

Contextual Background

Beta is nestled at the end of a heavily populated residential street. Its imposing structure characterized by its classic Greek architectural detail, complete with massive steps that evoke images of the Parthenon itself, which lead to the immense arched doorways of the main entrance looms as a bastion of anachronism among the dilapidated condition of the homes that now surround it. Mature trees are in abundance shading the plethora of single- and multiple-family housing structures.

Upon climbing the steps to the entrance and entering the building, visitors find themselves in an area that is well-lit, attributable in part to the sunshine which floods the interior of the building through myriad windows. The facility is well-maintained. Professionalism permeates the atmosphere. The voices of students do not pierce the air; in fact, the halls are void of the sound of either children or their teachers as students are in class. Principal Beta boasted, “We don’t have a visitor that comes now that does not say, ‘You know your hallways are so quiet and the children are all attentive, and everybody is so respectful, and you don’t hear any hollering or screaming from the teachers and the whole climate.’”

School Performance

The school performance score at Beta has grown from 52.6 in 2006-2007 to 64.4 in 2010-2011, or 11.8 points. The growth has been steady and consistent with Alpha increasing every year with one exception: in 2009-2010, the school performance score declined from 62.4 to 61.8. However, it rebounded to 64.4 the following year.

Turnaround Strategy

Prior to the start of the 2009-2010 school year, the district reconstituted Beta Elementary. Similar to the rationale for implementing Alpha's reconstitution strategy, Beta's reconstitution was a pre-emptive measure, also. However, according to Principal Beta, the state was prepared to take over the school. Further, as part of the school's restructure, the district implemented a research-based strategy, the Paideia program. Beta Principal stated, "We became the second Paideia school in the state of Louisiana. There are only two [in Louisiana]."

According to the Paideia Center, Paideia is "a holistic approach to life-long learning with roots in ancient Greece." The group espouses three "columns of instruction": didactic instruction, which is instruction that focuses on the delivery of factual information; intellectual coaching, which involves teacher modeling and questioning; and Paideia seminar, which consists of collaborative dialogue facilitated by the Socratic Method. Principal Beta explained, "We're really not doing anything different than in other schools. It's just some of the ways we choose to address to teach the items that are in the comprehensive curriculum."

Principal Beta asserted that the Paideia philosophy was most instrumental in transforming the climate and culture of the building to one that is respectful and positive. "I believe we were given the opportunity to turn into a Paideia school because the atmosphere and the climate and the culture really drive that Paideia way of learning," PB explained.

Additionally, both Principal Beta and Teacher Beta cited the use of data as part of the turnaround strategy. They described their use of benchmark assessments, state standardized test preparation, and skills assessments to drive instruction.

Implementation of the Turnaround Strategy

Principal Beta described a district-led implementation of reconstitution. When district leaders decided to reconstitute the school, they also selected a research-based strategy, the Paideia philosophy, to implement at the school. After having the reconstitution and plans for Paideia in place, Beta's district leader selected and hired a principal. The principal, then, had the responsibilities of hiring the rest of the staff and implementing Paideia. The principal received professional development on the Paideia philosophy and shared this with her staff.

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

Deference to expertise

Principal Beta explained the role of teacher leadership at the school. "We do have a leadership team, and on that team, two of the folks are [instructional] coaches. So, they are out of the classroom, but still classified as a teacher, and they work with children depending on what their job role is," she began. PB explained:

I have only two teachers in every grade with the exception of kindergarten, so when you have a grade-level meeting, you have two teachers. Sometimes, you have an enrichment teacher that comes in, a SPED [Special Education] teacher depending on what their schedule is. So, then you have a grade-level chair, which is just one of the two people. Because there is less [sic] than 20 homerooms, the relationship between [sic] my coordinator and my coaches and my teachers, it's more intimate.

PB stated, "They [teachers] are the professionals, they are the ones who know what their boys and girls need. . . ." She added that she assures all teachers at Beta: "You are the boss of that classroom. You're with those children from 8 to 4, not just 8 to 3, but you're there from 8 to 4 so you know what they need."

Teacher Beta expressed a perspective that illustrated the explanation of Principal Beta. Teachers have the latitude to remediate or accelerate what students learn based on each student's performance data. She stated:

They [teachers] were given a voice as far as restructuring their lesson plans, to really be able to plan accordingly for their students. They're able to say, 'red flag, I've got a student that is showing a strength in this program, what else can we give this student or I've got some students that are really struggling with this,, can I get some extra help for these kids?' Teachers feel comfortable enough saying, 'this is not working.'

Healthy preoccupation with failure

Each interviewee listed various types of data that are included in the discussion of students.

Table 10

Summary of Responses from District Leader 2, Principal Beta, and Teacher Beta

	Instructional	Behavioral	Other
DL2	State-level tests	Attendance Discipline/Suspensions	None identified
PB	Benchmark assessments (i.e., EAGLE, Odyssey, DIBELS) Standardized test data (i.e., LEAP, iLEAP) Course grades	Attendance Discipline Positive Behavior Support SET evaluation	Mobility
TB	Benchmark assessments Standardized test data	Discipline	Padeia projects

Two common themes emerge from District Leader 2, Principal Beta and Teacher Beta regarding the data that is included in the discussion of students: instructional and behavioral. However, while Principal Beta describes behavior being discussed on an “as needed basis,” Teacher Beta explained that it is a standing topic during the weekly planning meetings.

Both Principal Beta (PB) and Teacher Beta (TB) explained a similar process for reviewing student data. They each confirmed that data are discussed during weekly grade level meetings. PB displayed a data room in which a conference table designed to accommodate comfortably six people dominated the room. Chart-size pocket portfolios align each of the walls in the data room. The charts are grouped according to classroom teacher. On each chart are

individual pocket portfolios, a sleeve, labeled with each child's name. Inside each sleeve is a colored strip of paper, red, yellow, or green, which serves as a visual indicator of student performance on a benchmark assessment and resulting intensity of instruction required. Red represents "high alert": the student scored the equivalent of unsatisfactory and needs additional interventions and assistance. Yellow is "warning": the student scored the equivalent of approaching basic and needs some additional support. Green is "good progress": the student scored the equivalent of basic or better and should be accelerated to perform at even higher levels.

Teacher Beta explained, "They [teachers] actually sat and looked and analyzed [the data]. It was an aha moment." Further, both Principal Beta and Teacher Beta noted the use of data beyond the administrator and teacher level. PB commented, "Once this data is generated to look at class strengths and weaknesses and student strengths and weaknesses, school-wide strengths and weaknesses, then we take this information and students have individual data cards. We use those [data cards] . . . we are beginning to attempt student-led conferences." TB noted about students' use of data, ". . . it was funny, when they [students] saw where they were, back in the fall, and then they saw their name move up to the next color, which was of course another level, they were like, I moved up! . . . They actually can track their own data."

Reluctance to simplify interpretations

Principal Beta (PB) and Teacher Beta (TB) described a process that is similar to the process at Alpha to explain the response to indicators that students are in jeopardy of failing. PB explained the School Building Level Committee (SBLC) process, which involves a meeting with parents and teachers to develop an individualized plan to address students' needs as demonstrated by their performance data regarding instruction, attendance, or discipline. TB

shared that after results from a benchmark assessment showed a grade level at Beta had a reading deficiency, the school took a tiered approach to reading. “Now,” she remarked, “they [those students] have an additional 30 minutes of reading interventions every day because as a whole they were showing a weakness. . . . So, we changed our entire school schedule to help implement working with that grade level because they were really struggling.”

Further, TB emphasized the importance of building personal relationships with the students. TB stated, “just the knowledge of our kids” as an early warning indicator. She explained:

Our small population allows us to know more about our kids when they’re here. We had a little girl last week, her house burned down. So, we made a collection and went and bought her some uniforms and stuff. So, we’re taking care of the child. [Also,] we have a family that we’re constantly monitoring because they live across the street and know their home situation. So, there’s a bunch of them, teachers and faculty, who watch out for those kids that we know might not be getting any attention at home or who may be at home by themselves. So, [we are not concerned with] just the academics and the behavior of the child, but the whole child.

Commitment to resilience

Professional development is essential at Beta. Principal Beta describes it as “on-going and always changing.” Further elaboration from Teacher Beta reveals professional development is responsive to the needs demonstrated by student performance data, walk-through results from teachers, and district mandates. Principal Beta explained:

. . . you start off the beginning of the year with your plan. We’re always going to have certain components dealing with Paideia, of things that we need to accomplish school-wide, that’s not necessarily based on data. You have a few other ones that are set, things that you have to do: SBLC, looking at data, that kind of thing. We do that every year, but then, you also start the year and you do your walk thoughts and what do we need to address. What’s missing? What’s lacking? It [professional development] needs to be based on things that are happening, and transforming, and changing, and moving.

Teacher Beta added that Principal Beta encourages teachers to initiate professional development opportunities. TB described a time when 15 teachers wanted to attend a math

conference. According to TB, “[PB] said, ‘If you want to go, let me know.’ She just wrote one check, paid for them all of them to go.”

Factors Contributing to the Outcome at Beta

District Leader Two attributed the success at Beta to the faculty and staff at Beta. DL2 remarked:

She [Principal Beta] had the right team in place, and when you get your people on board, your team working with you and sharing your vision. . . and she said that this year she got two bang-up fifth grade teachers that were allying and understood what they were trying to do, and they looked at the data, created the individual [student learning] plan, and everybody was on board.

Principal Beta, also, credited the staff for the success of the turnaround efforts. PB explained:

Being able to interview interested applicants and select the best teachers made implementation of the whole new approach. . . it made a big difference with the new staff. We might have had some teachers here that were mediocre, who weren’t necessarily ineffective enough to be replaced, but during re-staffing, we were able to replace those teachers with more highly effective individuals without really having to go through the process of termination.

Teacher Beta, however, credited Principal Beta for making palatable the reconstitution, implementation of Paideia, and the use of data. TB stated:

It really starts with the administration [Principal]. The [Principal] is given this data that comes from the district and the state. So, we try to approach it in a way that makes it easier for the teachers so that they’re not working harder, but working smarter.

Further, TB listed the additional resources that are available to students at Beta as provided by the district: a Families in Transition teacher (FITS), who is responsible for working one-on-one or in small groups with students who transfer into the school; and a FITS counselor, who holds small group counseling sessions with students as needed and serves as a liaison with the parents to address social needs.

Summary of Findings at Beta

Beta, a school that has experienced clear, unambiguous growth in its school performance score, instituted the reconstitution model as its turnaround strategy. As part of the reconstitution model, the district implemented the research-based Paideia principles as well. Principal Beta embraced the turnaround strategies and hired a new staff. PB defers to the expertise of the teachers, reminding them of her expectation that they “are the boss of that classroom.” PB established a leadership team that includes teachers to give them voice in the decision-making process for the school. Further, weekly grade-level meetings give structure to the healthy preoccupation with failure. During these meetings, teachers discuss student performance data and other data sources that impact students’ ability to succeed. Ancillary personnel who have been added as additional school resources resulting from the reconstitution participate in these meetings when they are needed to address the needs of a student. The reluctance to simplify interpretations is demonstrated by the immediate, individualized response to students’ instructional, behavioral, or other data that indicate the need for interventions. The inclusion of relevant personnel to address students’ needs shows sensitivity to operations, though in a limited scope. The high rate of student mobility inhibits communication across grade levels. The commitment to resilience is evident by PB’s ongoing investment in professional development that is responsive to the needs of teachers, the school, and the reconstitution plan.

Case Study 3: Gamma Elementary School

Contextual Background

Situated against the backdrop of the traditional inner-city, which is characterized by worn housing, numerous churches, and miscellaneous small businesses in an economically depressed part of town, Gamma, with its red brick and painted wood structure, remains a relic of simpler

times. The school faces a two-way street that leads to an aged neighborhood that is populated by weathered clapboard houses. “It’s a neighborhood on the decline,” Principal Gamma confirmed.

PG continued:

Because the neighborhood has declined. . . people have moved out and become older, student enrollment has declined. So, the superintendent has consolidated schools. Two years ago, my school was combined with another elementary school that was closed. At the end of this year, my school is being consolidated with a school down the street.

During the visit, Principal Gamma shared, “See that house over there?” as he pointed to the house across the street from the school. He continued, “The lady who lives there is about 80 years old. She attended here when she was in elementary school. She has lived in that house all this time.”

The rear of the school faces a major four-lane highway. Visitors enter the campus from the rear, passing through the gate to a tall, chain-linked fence. Upon entering the building, the hollow sound of footsteps climbing the stairs reverberates against the walls during the short hike to the floor of the main office. On that floor, classrooms filled with children working and teachers directing fill the atmosphere.

School Performance

The school performance score at Gamma has vacillated, declining, at times, almost 5 points between the 2006-2007 and 2010-2011 school years. From a four-year high of 64.9, the school performance score declined to 61.3 in 2010-2011.

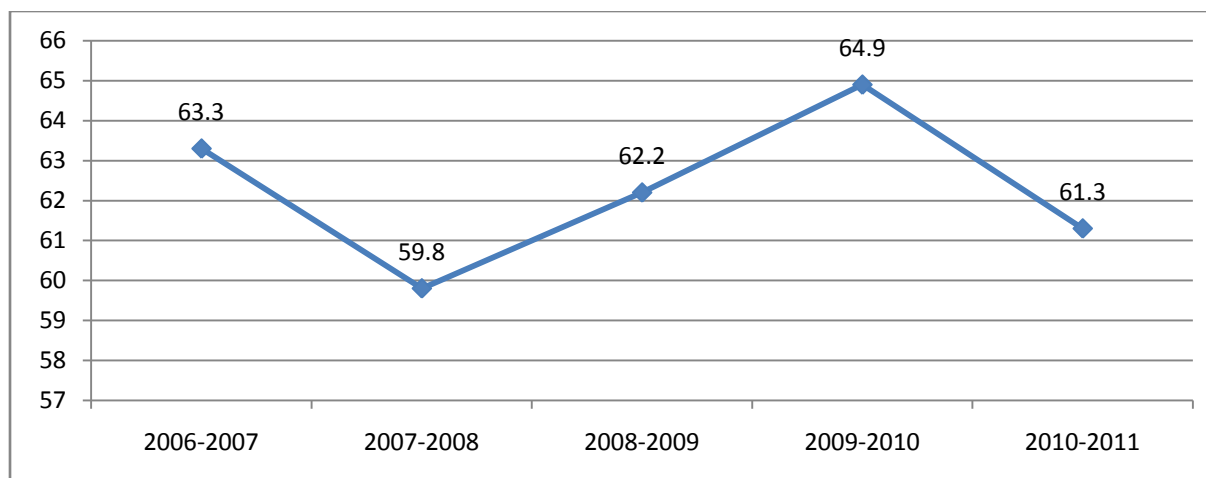


Figure 6. Longitudinal performance of Gamma. Louisiana Department of Education School Report Cards, data source.⁵

Turnaround Strategy

While District Leader 2 identified the district-wide turnaround strategies as data-driven instruction, using data to meet the needs of students, and Response to Intervention, Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma listed other strategies.

Table 11

Summary of Turnaround Strategies at Gamma

Turnaround Strategies Identified by Principal and Teacher from Gamma Elementary School	
Principal Gamma	Teacher Gamma
Reading First Program Ensuring Numeracy for All Initiative Three-Tiered Intervention Model Five Foundations of Reading Reading Coaches Reading Interventionists	Check-in/ Check-Out System Saturday Academy External Providers of Extended Learning Opportunities Math Interventions Reading Interventions

⁵ Louisiana Department of Education. School Report Cards. Retrieved 24 May 2012 from <http://louisianaschools.net/reportcards/>

Table 11 continued

Turnaround Strategies Identified by Principal and Teacher from Gamma Elementary School	
Principal Gamma	Teacher Gamma
School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Use of Data Departmentalization in grades 3-5 Saturday Academy Technology Job-embedded Professional Development Looping	

The Reading First program is federally funded and is designed to support the implementation of scientifically-based reading research to inform early reading instruction to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade (U. S. Department of Education, 2009). It is this program that allows Gamma to fund the three-tiered intervention approach, five foundations of reading, reading coaches, reading interventionists, and related professional development. Both Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma identified reading interventions as significant turnaround strategies.

Teacher Gamma stated, “We have daily reading interventions for those [students who perform at] grade level, those who are strategic, meaning that they’re close to accomplishing where they should be, and those that are sliding down.”

A similar model exists for mathematics. The Ensuring Numeracy for All program is state-funded and supports various strategies to help students in grades pre-Kindergarten through fifth achieve success in mathematics (Louisiana Department of Education). Gamma utilizes a tiered approach to mathematics, providing students with additional instruction based on their math achievement levels. According to Teacher Gamma, students work either one-on-one or in small groups with teachers for additional instruction. The instruction students receive is determined by their performance on regular benchmark assessments. “Not only do we work with

those who are scoring below grade level, but also with those we're pushing toward mastery and advanced. We're working with both groups trying to bring the bottom up, take the ceiling level off," Teacher Gamma reported.

Both Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma identified school turnaround strategies that address student behavior. Principal Gamma identified the School-wide Positive Behavior Support System. Teacher Gamma identified one activity from the system, the student check-in/check-out system, which targets students with repeated challenging behaviors. Each of these students has an assigned faculty mentor with whom the students check throughout the day. Teacher Gamma reported, "This has alleviated a lot of stuff [challenges] because when a student knows that they're going to report to their mentor, sometimes the behavior would try to improve because you want a good report; you want a good record."

Extended learning opportunities also ranked among the strategies to effect school turnaround. Principal Gamma explained:

We select the students that we know are going to do well. We try to push those advanced and mastery, so we may take students who are approaching [basic] and try to push them to basic. We do ELA and math on Saturdays. We take 15 Saturdays. We have four teachers and they have small class sizes. We have about 40 students we try to target.

Implementation of the Turnaround Strategy

Principal Gamma implemented the district-initiated turnaround strategies of data-driven instruction, the use of data to meet the needs of students, and response to intervention by means of executing various activities within each of these categories. Some of the strategies were articulated by Teacher Gamma as well. However, the specific manner in which these strategies were implemented was not clear.

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

Deference to expertise

Teacher leadership is limited to matters of instructional planning. Principal Gamma responded, “We have great teachers that are involved in professional development. They present professional development [after they have been sent] to local and national professional development in-services.” Teacher Gamma responded, “We don’t have necessarily a leader. Well, in some grades you can tell who’s a leader because somebody that has more experience might be leading it out.” TG added:

I guess you would look at all of them as leaders for their grade level, and they’re making sure that no student, even though it’s in a different classroom, no student is missing out on anything that would be happening in another classroom so they share lesson plans and ideas daily.

According to TG, teachers do have the latitude to adjust lessons based on collaboration with other teachers.

Healthy preoccupation with failure

Both Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma identify instructional data as that which they use to discuss students who are found to be at risk of failing. Specifically, Principal Gamma listed: iLEAP, LEAP, DIBELS, EAGLE, and benchmark assessments. Teacher Gamma listed EAGLE and benchmark assessments. Teacher Gamma reported that grade level meetings to discuss this data occur “twice a month.” Principal Gamma reported, “We do that [discuss] three times a year, but once a month, we are doing the lateral groups where we are looking at all the data.” Principal Gamma explained a process that Teacher Gamma did not:

My interventionist and I, we do the item analysis for them [teachers] and let them see which items they need to. We do this mostly on grade level or we do the lateral groups on a Monday. At least monthly we look at it and print out a report. They have their data notebooks with the information they need. The benchmark assessments give them

suggested activities to focus on those GLEs they need to focus on. At least once a month, we do the groups that focus on the data.

Teacher Gamma reported that the Principal, the instructional coordinator, the counselor, the interventionist, as well as the teachers attend the grade level meetings. TG further stated that the school board may send someone who may have knowledge of some specific strategy the district wants implemented to participate in the grade level meeting.

Reluctance to simplify interpretations

Principal Gamma noted that the School Building Level Committee meets to address behavior and academic needs. Teacher Gamma explained that during these meetings, the committee attempts to identify the cause of students' failure. Resulting responses to the threat of failure may include: changing the students' groups to provide additional instruction, recommending the student to after school extended learning opportunities, recommending a student's participation in the Saturday Academy, or the assigning of a mentor. Principal Gamma stated that the academic data is used to "more or less help us with our re-teaching and our redelivery."

Sensitivity to operations

Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma identified assessment data and discipline data as the sources of early warning indicators to identify students who are at risk of failing. Teacher Gamma asserted that communication occurs across grade levels, as it relates to instruction.

Commitment to resilience

Professional development is implemented at the school. Principal Gamma stated that teachers provide input concerning the professional development they receive through formal surveys distributed by the district. Based on the feedback received, the district may implement topics according to teacher interest. Also, Principal Gamma stated some professional

development is determined by district mandates. As the district implements certain initiatives, teachers and principals are prepared for its delivery.

Teacher Gamma, however, stated, “[Principal Gamma] makes the basic decision [about professional development], but he always leaves it open to anyone who’s gone to any type of training to share that.”

Factors Contributing to the Outcome at Gamma

Principal Gamma opined that staffing hurt the school’s performance last year: “The staff members came with the students [as a result of school consolidation].” He explained:

But. . . with the turnaround, they want you to try to develop teachers. I had some young teachers that were sending a whole lot of students to the office. Especially one in particular, he was good with his content knowledge and he was one I inherited from the other school, but then as far as his management, it really hurt me. Our personnel director wants you to try to start with the young teachers and try to develop them, but then you don’t have time [as a principal].

PG noted as well, the cultural gap between teachers and students that hinder the academic progress of students:

There is a difference between the teacher’s reality and the student’s, and it has to do with the community and the school also, but [as for] the teachers, how they related to the students. My staff is about 50-50 African American and Caucasian. Of course, most of my Black teachers can relate, but you realize also, we become middle class and we kind of forget about the connection we had to our background. It [the cultural gap] doesn’t have to be racial, necessarily. It can be a class thing.

However, Teacher Gamma commented that the teachers contributed to the success at Gamma.

TG stated:

The teachers are desirous of the students to do better. There’s a high level of expectation here from the teachers and everyone is basically on the same page as far as pushing the students to achieve all that they can.

Summary of Findings at Gamma

Gamma, a school that has experienced inconsistent growth in its school performance score, implemented the district mandated strategies of data-driven instruction, using data to meet the needs of individual students, and the response to intervention model. Principal Gamma implemented various activities as part of the turnaround strategies. Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma expressed a narrow deference to expertise; in fact, teacher leadership is exercised only as it relates to planning for classroom instruction. Grade-level meetings occur, during which student assessment data and discipline data are discussed; however, the frequency of these meetings is unclear with Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma providing inconsistent responses. The reluctance to simplify interpretations is not supported by a defined process for responding to early warning indicators from individual students that are in jeopardy of failing. Showing sensitivity to operations, whenever grade-level committees meet to discuss student data, appropriate personnel participate in the discussion, beyond the classroom teacher, according to Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma. The commitment to resilience, as evidenced by ongoing professional development, is only as effective as the choices teachers make for themselves or the mandates issued by the district.

Case Study 4: Delta Elementary School

Contextual Background

Delta Elementary School is a massive structure located on a major thoroughfare in the inner-city. The activity outside of the school is equally matched by the activity inside of the school. Upon entering the building, visitors are immediately greeted with the noise of children and teachers. One voice, belonging to a female, resonates above all others from the hallway directly in front of the main entrance to the school. “Where is your teacher?” the voice demands.

“Are you here alone? You shouldn’t be!” As I draw closer to the voice, I see children in a sometimes- single-file line struggling to curb their natural enthusiasm. “Where are you going?” she asks. Several students respond, “To the cafeteria!” “Well, your teacher should be with you, but even if she isn’t, you know how we expect you to behave!” Later, I find out the voice belongs to Principal Delta, and she commands the atmosphere at Delta. “Back up and try this line again. Single-file this time! No talking!” she directs them. The students quietly do as she asked. “That’s better. Now, I will get another teacher to wait with you until your teacher arrives,” she tells them. At that moment, the teacher bursts from the restroom, her cheeks flushed perhaps from the negative attention her students have drawn to themselves and to her from Principal Delta. She quickly mumbles, “Thank you,” to the Principal, regains control of her class, and escorts them down the hallway.

School Performance

The school performance score at Delta has consistently declined between the 2006-2007 and 2010-2011 school years. From a five-year high of 61.1, the school performance score declined to 57.3 in 2010-2011.

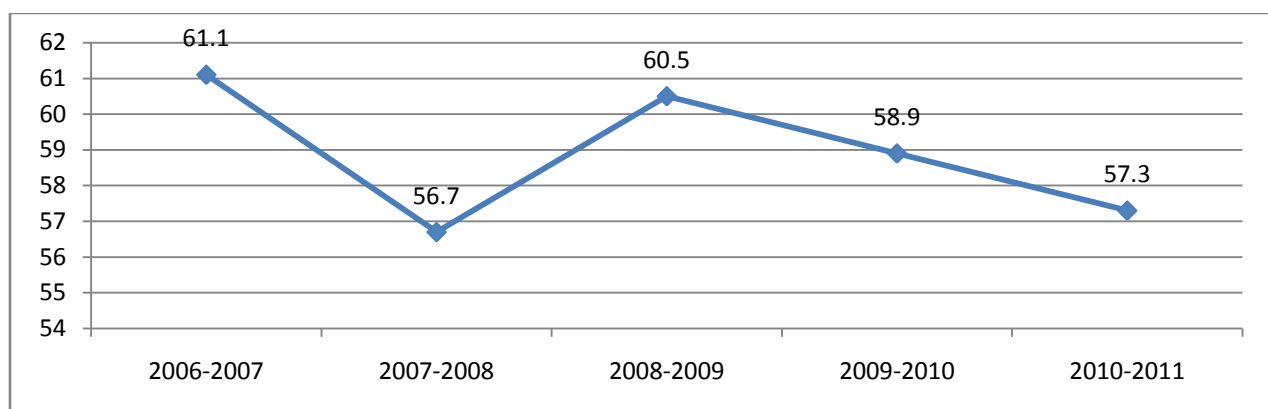


Figure 7. Longitudinal performance of Delta. Louisiana Department of Education School Report Cards, data source.⁶

⁶ Louisiana Department of Education. School Report Cards. Retrieved 24 May 2012 from <http://louisianaschools.net/reportcards/>

Turnaround Strategy

Principal Delta identified several turnaround strategies: professional development in behavior modification, a school partnership with the College of Education at Louisiana State University (Shreveport), looping, and tiered instruction. Teacher Gamma confirmed the implementation of tiered instruction.

Concerning behavior modification, Principal Delta explained:

[Student] behavior is one of the biggest areas of concern. My staff now has somewhat of a difficult time handling inner city students. We purchased a book. We have not received them, yet, and we are going to talk about how to educate students in high poverty areas. That is really one of the greatest needs for change this year.

However, Teacher Gamma (TG) did not mention student behavior as a particular challenge.

Instead, TG cited “the lack of foundational skills, lack of structure, and need for boundaries.”

Further, TG affirmed feeling equipped to handle the population at Delta.

The school partnership with Louisiana State University at Shreveport had been in place for several years. However, Principal Delta (PD) sought to strengthen the relationship and engender an active role for the university in the instructional program. PD explained as part of the turnaround, a specific college education course is housed on the campus to allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to work with students. According to PD, “They [LSU students] do pre- and post-testing, and they work with children. Once we do the pre-assessments, [we place the children in tiers]. [Then] the Louisiana State University students will come out and work with those students.” In consultation with the professor from Louisiana State University, PD moves students among the tiers to work directly with the pre-service teachers. Further, PD stated the professor from Louisiana State University provides professional development for the teachers at Delta as well.

Principal Delta identified looping as a turnaround strategy. According to the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (1997), looping is the practice in which a single graded class of children stays with a teacher for two or more grade levels. Among the benefits of looping include providing students with a stable learning environment that supports the developmental changes of students and the opportunity to build meaningful relationships between the school/teacher and families. PD explained, “We took the third grade teachers because they knew the third grade students, and we looped them to fourth grade.”

Principal Delta and Teacher Delta both described a process for tiered interventions. Principal Delta explained that pre-service teachers work with students in small groups to “bridge gaps.” Students who are assigned to tier one groups are accelerated while students who are assigned to tier two groups are remediated. Pre-service teachers provide the additional instruction.

Implementation of the Turnaround Strategy

Principal Delta implemented the strategies initiated by the district: data-driven instruction, using data to meet the needs of individual students, and the response to intervention model. One of the strategies was articulated by Teacher Delta as well. However, the specific manner in which these strategies were implemented was not clear.

Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

Deference to expertise

Teacher leadership seemed to be extremely limited in scope. Principal Delta described teacher leadership as “poor, but growing, developing.” PD explained:

I really thought that I could lay it all out, all of my teachers got this, everything that needs to be done is right here, how to take it, what to do with it. I thought that we talked about what their agendas needed to look like each month, how they needed to share, and so I let them go, and they were lost. So, I still provide that structure for them.

In fact, Principal Delta elaborated on her own work in the classroom:

I was in the classroom last week and the children were doing a practice LEAP writing, and they were like kindergarten kids, and I took up all the papers at the fourth grade level, and I said ‘Unacceptable! This is not what I expect to see come from you, especially since you have worked so hard for 10 weeks.’ So I took it and I asked them...we have been doing the power words explained, described, so we went back over it again and then I started giving them personal experiences about explaining, describing. Then, I let them give me their own personal experiences. Then, we spent about half a day just doing activities, and then we wrote. I took their writings out to the college last Friday and the pre-service teachers are going to grade them using the LEAP rubric. They will grade them and we will come back and give the children feedback. The thing the kids felt so good about was the fact that they had done something that not only pleased me, but they are actually going to get to publish those works because I told them they were awesome. The very next day the students came in and said Ms. Ryan, they're just writing so much better, they're just really describing. I was in the room and I just sat there and I smiled.

Opportunities for teacher leadership remain unclear. Teacher Delta mentioned that each grade level has a chairperson and “I assume they have input [on what happens in the classroom].”

Healthy preoccupation with failure

Principal Delta stated that instructional data and data related to behavior are included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing. PD identified instructional data as: the STAR reading and math assessments, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment, LEAP, and progress monitoring. Teacher Delta identified the STAR assessment and progress monitoring instruments.

Principal Delta stated that she meets with teachers weekly and some Saturdays in professional learning communities to discuss data. PD described the process:

We set up all throughout for the whole year when we were going to test, pre-assess, when we were going to meet to discuss the results of the pre-assessments, when we were going to progress monitor and how long we were going to do that, and how we were going to develop our plans of action to either remedy or enrich what we saw. I developed these things called implementation calendars. Everybody has these. Then we took month by month and I broke it down, what was going to be implemented from the assessment piece to the professional development, formal and informal assessment, implementation of the comprehensive curriculum unit, professional development, parent

involvement...everything. How was it going to be implemented: month by month by month. Now, I come back and [follow up]. Like tomorrow, we are going to be meeting in grade level groups to talk about where we are in monitoring DIBELS development. I come back each week. They have all of this for the whole year.

Teacher Delta affirmed that meetings take place “regularly.” TD stated that the principal, assistant principal, and the school counselor attend so that “everybody will know what’s going on. . . I guess what direction we’re going.”

Reluctance to simplify interpretations

After reviewing instructional data, according to Principal Delta and Teacher Delta, students are provided appropriate classroom interventions. Principal Delta explained that she created four intervention rooms, one for each content area at fifth grade. “I set them up,” she asserted. Principal Delta elaborated:

I decorated it. Set it up. Got the science tables from some school and painted them. I did it the way I always set my classrooms up. I went to Wal-Mart, and I bought a swing, a big swing for the reading area. I was trying to model for them, every intervention center that is set up is complete with directions. I took the kids in. I told them how to work centers, how to read their directions, what was in it. These kids are the ones who are making the biggest gains.

Sensitivity to operations

Principal Delta and Teacher Delta identified assessment data and discipline data as the sources of early warning indicators to identify students who are at risk of failing. Principal Delta asserted that communication about student progress occurs across grade levels, as it relates to instruction. Teacher Delta described communication only within grade levels, including persons who may provide necessary resources to address students’ needs.

Commitment to resilience

Principal Delta stated that she initiated some professional development based on her observations of teacher performance. In fact, she “progress monitors” teachers on her staff.

Principal Delta acknowledged, also, that other professional development is mandated by the district. Teacher Delta confirmed that Principal Delta coordinated professional development at the school.

Factors Contributing to the Outcome at Delta

Principal Delta identified the staff as a weakness. “My staff now, I think the most experienced I have on my staff now is like five years. I may have one teacher with 13 years’ experience, but I have practically a baby staff,” PD noted. “Those nurturing kinds of things. . . I don’t know if new teachers have that. New teachers are just a different kind of people,” PD added.

Summary of the Findings at Delta

Delta, a school that has consistently declined in its school performance score, implemented the district mandated strategies of data-driven instruction, using data to meet the needs of individual students, and the response to intervention model. Principal Delta implemented various activities as part of the turnaround strategies. Principal Delta and Teacher Delta expressed limited to no deference to teacher expertise. Weekly professional learning community meetings occur, during which student assessment data is discussed. The reluctance to simplify interpretations is not supported by a systematic, defined process for responding to early warning indicators from individual students that are in jeopardy of failing other than providing students with tiered interventions. Showing sensitivity to operations is unclear, for whenever grade-level committees meet to discuss student data, Principal Gamma seemed to be the dominant voice. The commitment to resilience, as evidenced by ongoing professional development, is limited to Principal Delta’s observations and district mandates, with no evidence of teacher input being considered.

Summary of the Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

To provide a consistent and quantifiable means to measure and compare the degree of implementation of the characteristics of High Reliability Organizations, the researcher developed a Likert-type scale. On this scale, “0” indicates no evidence of implementation; “1” indicates there is evidence of minimal execution; “2” indicates there is evidence that the implementation is in the early effective stage; and “3” indicates there is evidence of good implementation, meaning that the characteristic has been in use for some time and has garnered positive effects on student achievement. Each school in the study was assigned a score on this scale in each of the five characteristics of High Reliability Organizations based on the participant interviews and artifacts provided.

Table 12

Summary of Indicators of Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations in Study Schools

HRO Characteristic	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
Deference to expertise	3	2	1	0
Healthy preoccupation with failure	3	3	1	2
Reluctance to simplify operations	3	2	1	1
Sensitivity to operations	3	2	1	0
Commitment to resilience	3	3	2	1

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to ascertain whether the characteristics of High Reliability Organizations affected the effectiveness of turnaround strategies in high poverty, persistently low-achieving schools. This chapter discusses the results of the interview analysis organized by the research questions for this study. Specifically, the researcher sought to answer:

RQ1: What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround?

RQ2: How were the turnaround strategies implemented?

RQ3: How does the implementation design used to implement the turnaround strategies relate to characteristics of High Reliability Organizations (i. e., (a) a healthy preoccupation with failure, (b) a reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) a sensitivity to operations, (d) a commitment to resilience, and (e) deferring of critical decisions to those who have the highest level of expertise in the issue at hand).

RQ4: What factors during implementation contributed to the success or failure of the turnaround strategies?

Interview Analysis Summary

The interview data was analyzed using a version of Glaser and Strauss (1967) open coding technique (see Chapter 3 – Methodology). The basic procedure used in open coding involves the researcher reading and re-reading interview transcripts in order to identify and label emergent, distinguishing features. Then, the researcher combines those features with strong commonalities into a single theme. Upon identifying a theme, the researcher gives it a label or name that is representative of its common features. Finally, the researcher examines relationships

within themes and between the themes and the study variables in order to generate a set of findings.

Range of Turnaround Strategies

Interview analysis began with a general examination of the interview in terms of turnaround strategies. Study participants listed a range of turnaround strategies and resulting school-based instructional activities, including professional development, implemented at their respective school sites.

Table 13

Turnaround Strategies Listed by Study Participants

Turnaround Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconstitution• Implementation of a specific, research-based framework• Data-Driven Instruction• Response to Intervention• Use of Data to Meet the Needs of Students• Job-embedded Professional Development on Behavior Modification• Looping• Tiered Instruction

At times, specific instructional activities were identified synonymously with overall turnaround strategies. This occurred most often in the schools that showed stagnant or regressive growth, as in the case of Gamma (see Table 13). This general lack of clarity regarding the method utilized to address specific student performance needs may indicate a lack of understanding of student performance itself or particularly, how to address it.

Further, the degree of implementation associated with the strategies listed in Table 13 varies based on the Principal's perceived effectiveness of the teachers. It varies according to the amount of professional support the school receives from the district office, also.

Alpha and Beta, the schools that showed clear, unambiguous growth, had the turnaround strategies more deeply embedded than Gamma and Delta, the schools that showed stagnant or regressive growth. Alpha and Beta both had principals who recognized the expertise of their teachers and encouraged their autonomy to adjust instruction based on their expertise. The principals have developed formal processes to hear the teachers' voices and gather their input concerning daily school operations. In contrast, Gamma and Delta did not reveal such a process.

The districts provided additional resources in the form of staffing to Alpha and Beta. Also, additional district funds were expended to fully implement the strategies at Alpha and Beta. In contrast, neither Gamma nor Delta received additional resources.

Study findings suggest that school-based personnel engage in turnaround strategies that have been selected by the school district. The manner in which the strategies are implemented varies by school; therefore, the degree of implementation of the strategies varies as well. The allocation of additional resources to support the strategies varies by school, which may impact the effectiveness of the strategies as well.

Implementation of Turnaround Strategies

Study participants, in general, did not identify a systemic nor systematic manner in which the turnaround strategies were implemented. The turnaround strategies were selected by the district with little to no input from school-based personnel. However, study participants at Alpha, the school that showed the greatest gains, described a process that was inclusive of external input. District Leader 1 described appealing to various community leaders for support of the pre-emptive reconstitution plan at Alpha. The district worked to gain that support, which in turn, led to a positive reception from the community. District Leader 1 also explained that the principal was selected by the district office and was provided professional development to

execute the plan. Principal Alpha, in turn, carefully selected his staff to include persons who would support the implementation. Principal Alpha emphasized ongoing professional development and monitoring for teachers to support the implementation of the turnaround strategy.

A similar process emerged for Beta, the other school that showed clear, unambiguous growth in student performance. However, community input was lacking. What remained similar was the reconstitution process itself, which was developed by the district. In this case, as well, the district selected the principal who, in turn, was allowed to select the staff at Beta. Principal Beta provided professional development for teachers specifically related to the turnaround strategies at the school.

In contrast, neither Gamma nor Delta study participants identified specific steps taken to implement the turnaround strategies placed in their school by the district. Principal Gamma and Principal Delta explained only their perception of the strategies being carried out, not how those strategies came to be.

Study findings suggest that a deliberate implementation process that involves both the district-level personnel, school-based personnel, and the community results in greater buy-in for the turnaround strategy. This process leads to depth of understanding of the process as well.

Findings Associated with the Characteristics of High Reliability Organizations

Deference to expertise

Interviews indicate that the district leaders vary in their approach to schools. District Leader 1, who supervises Alpha, without reserve attributed the success of the school to Principal Alpha. Because of District Leader 1's confidence in Principal Alpha, Principal Alpha has unprecedented autonomy in the daily operations of Alpha. In turn, Principal Alpha, having the

opportunity to select his staff, exhibits similar confidence in his staff. Principal Alpha has the most formalized process for soliciting teacher input in the form of a faculty council that meets weekly not only about instructional matters, but those concerning the daily operation of the school as well. These meetings are in addition to the weekly grade-level meetings that strictly cover instructional matters. Principal Alpha has formalized the process for receiving input from teachers, reacting to the input, and then providing the teachers timely feedback. Teacher Alpha confirmed this process. Artifacts such as meeting agendas, meeting notes, and resulting activities served as evidence, also. This is the rationale for the rating of “3”; this characteristic has been in use for some time and has garnered positive effect son student achievement.

District Leader 2, who supervises Beta, Gamma, and Delta, attributed the success of Beta to the team Principal Beta has selected. District Leader 2, however, described a process that includes another district-level leader having regular contact with Beta, Gamma, and Delta concerning instructional matters. This sub-level district leader is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of those schools. Principal Beta also attributed the success of data to her staff. However, Principal Beta explained a process of weekly grade-level meetings during which teachers discuss the performance data of students. Using this data, teachers have the latitude to accelerate or remediate each student based upon their individual data. Further, teachers develop individual learning plans for each student so that communication is not only among the principal and teacher, but includes the student as well. This formalized process for teacher leadership and input has been in use for some time. However, teacher input is limited only to instructional matters. This is the rationale for the rating of “2”; this characteristic is in the early effective stage.

Principal Gamma described teacher leadership in terms of the re-delivery of professional development. Teacher Gamma expressed the lack of a formal process for identifying teacher leaders, other than they emerge due to seniority. Teacher Gamma asserted that based on student performance data, teachers have the latitude to adjust lessons. However, no process for formal review of data emerged from these interviews, which is the rationale for the rating of “1”; there is evidence of minimal execution of this characteristic.

Principal Delta and Teacher Delta described very little opportunity for teacher leadership. In fact, Principal Delta expressed little confidence in her teachers and shared occasions when she assumed control of a classroom from a teacher to demonstrate effective teaching. These narratives and the lack of available formal venues for teacher input is the rationale for the rating of “0” in this characteristic; there is no evidence of its implementation.

Healthy preoccupation with failure

The discussion of data varies among schools. Study participants from all four report regularly reviewing instructional data, which mainly consists of the results of formative and summative assessments. Also, study participants reported regularly reviewing behavioral data, consisting of teacher referrals and suspensions. The discussion of instructional data, in general, takes place during scheduled, grade-level collaborative meetings. These meetings may be held only among the teachers themselves. However, at Alpha and Beta, the principal and any other ancillary personnel who may provide support to student needs regularly participate as well.

Discussions concerning behavior are guided by the school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports model at Alpha and Beta. Study participants from Alpha and Beta both described systematic discussions are held concerning students, and interventions that may

be implemented to address inappropriate behavior. For their systematic approach to data and data analysis, the rating of “3” was assigned to each.

However, Principal Gamma and Teacher Gamma lacked consistency in their report of data discussions. While they both listed instructional data as the indicator used to discuss students who are at risk of failing, when these discussions take place and how they take place were inconsistent. Because of the lack of consistency regarding data discussions and use, the rating of “1” was assigned.

Study participants for Delta reported that both data related to instruction and behavior are discussed. Yet, similar to Gamma, there was a lack of consistency concerning when the discussions take place. Principal Delta, however, showed evidence of and explained a process for reviewing data with teachers that resulted in teachers’ having to create an action plan documenting their resulting adjustment to student instruction. For the discussion of data and the formalized method of using the data, the rating of “2” was assigned.

Reluctance to simplify interpretations

In response to data that indicate students are at risk of failure, District Leader 1 described a choice of interventions from which school sites may choose to address students’ needs. In contrast, District Leader 2 stated the responsibility for response is at the school level. Schools are expected to monitor student performance, discuss it and make modifications and adjustments as necessary.

At Alpha, Principal Alpha revamped the district-formalized School Building Level Committee (SBLC) process (See Figure 5) to expedite interventions for students who show indicators that they are at-risk of failing, according to Principal Alpha and Teacher Alpha. This

expedited process increased the effectiveness of recovery efforts for students. For this process and its efficiency, the rating of “3” was assigned.

Principal Beta and Teacher Beta explained the use of the SBLC process as well. There is no expeditor to the process, though. The process at Beta includes the students in the discussion of their data, which gives students ownership of their performance. While the process of review is extensive, and some changes have been made school-wide to respond to the general needs students, the response lacks a formalized response process for individual student learning. Beta earned a rating of “2” for this characteristic.

Principal Gamma provided a general response to the use of instructional data, alluding to the SBLC process and acknowledging that the academic data is used to “more or less help us with our re-teaching and redelivery.” For this narrow scope regarding the use of data, Gamma received a rating of “1” for this characteristic.

Study participants at Delta explained that following a regular review of instructional data, students are provided classroom interventions based on that data. Principal Delta then explained on the measures she took personally to establish intervention rooms. However, Principal Delta never mentioned teacher involvement in responding to student data beyond writing an action plan to address their overall instructional direction. Delta received a rating of “0” for this characteristic.

Sensitivity to operations

Regularly sharing the data with those who may have additional expertise to assist in meeting students’ needs varies among schools. At Alpha, the expedited SBLC process requires communication among the school. This process is followed with fidelity, for which Alpha received a rating of “3.” Study participants described a similar process at Beta, for which they

received a rating of “3.” At Gamma, this process was generalized, with Teacher Gamma asserting that concerns about instructional data are shared across grade levels. Gamma received a rating of “1.” Study participants at Delta, however, lack consistency regarding the expanse of communication about student performance data. Principal Delta asserted communication is across grade levels. Teacher Delta asserts communication is only within grade levels, but includes any ancillary personnel who may support meeting students’ needs. Delta earned a rating of “0,” for lack of evidentiary support.

Commitment to resilience

In general, study participants at all four schools listed multiple sources of professional development for their respective teachers. Some professional development is mandated by the district. Other professional development is initiated by the school. Finally, professional development may be determined by the desires expressed by teachers. At Alpha, the district-mandated professional development may be tailored to the needs of the school. In addition, Principal Alpha has the autonomy to initiate professional development that meets an immediate need at the school. For teacher-selected professional development, Principal Alpha developed a formal request and review process. Requests are granted based on the needs of the school. Following attendance at any professional development activity, teachers must re-deliver their learning. Finally, Principal Alpha regularly monitors by means of informal walkthroughs for the implementation of strategies gained. For this process, Alpha received a rating of “3.”

Study participants at Beta described a process that is fluid and ongoing. Principal Beta explained that some professional development is mandated by the district, but much of it is determined by the nature of the instructional program at the school. Principal Beta asserted the used of walk-through results and student performance as means for determining the professional

development teachers receive. Teacher Beta, however, added that Principal Beta allows teachers the latitude to select professional development opportunities as well. Beta received a rating of “3” for this characteristic.

At Gamma, Principal Gamma reported that professional development is implemented at the school. Teachers provide input to the district-level regarding the professional development they desire. Teacher Gamma stated that Principal Gamma makes the decisions regarding professional development, but he does allow teachers to share what they have learned from any professional development opportunity. This process lacks specificity. Gamma received a rating of “2” for this characteristic.

Study participants at Delta stated that Principal Delta initiated professional development based on teacher performance. Further, Principal Delta stated that she “progress monitors” her teachers as well. Teacher Delta stated that Principal Delta coordinated professional development at the school. Delta received a rating of “1” for this characteristic because of its narrow scope.

Factors Affecting the Success or Failure of the Turnaround Strategies

Study participants listed a limited range of factors that affected the implementation of the turnaround strategies. All of the factors relate to issues that are primarily school-based.

Table 14

Range of Factors Affecting the Success or Failure of Turnaround Strategies

Factors Reported by Study Participants	
School Leadership (the Principal)	Consistency
Teachers	Data-Based Instruction

The schools with clear, unambiguous growth, Alpha and Beta list positive factors as school leadership, teachers, consistency, and data-based instruction. Both Gamma and Delta listed teachers as the only negative factor. These findings suggest that schools with positive growth

understand, or at least appreciate, the systematic nature of implementing turnaround strategies. However, schools that have remained stagnant or regressed had a limited perception concerning why they lacked progress. This limited perception recurs as a theme throughout their implementation of turnaround strategies.

While the study participants provided these specific factors, each factor aligns to a characteristic of High Reliability Organizations (HRO). The two schools with clear, unambiguous growth, Alpha and Beta, had a higher degree of HRO characteristics. For example, Alpha, which has grown 12.8 points in its school performance score since 2006-2007, constituting the largest growth of all schools, has strong evidence of all five HRO characteristics. Alpha earned a rating of “3” in all areas: deference to expertise, healthy preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify operations, sensitivity to operations, and commitment to resilience.

Beta experienced similar results having grown 11.8 points since 2006-2007. Beta received a rating of “3” in the HRO characteristics of healthy preoccupation with failure and commitment to resilience. In short, Beta has a systematic process for discussing data, including the type of data to review. Professional development is based on the needs of the school and teachers are given the opportunity to have a voice in what they attend. Beta has the opportunity to grow in the other areas: deference to expertise, reluctance to simplify operations, and sensitivity to operations. However, study participants at Beta describe processes that, if refined, will continue to engender increased student achievement.

Gamma and Delta rated minimally in all areas with two exceptions. Gamma received a rating of “2” for commitment to resilience, and Delta received a rating of “2” for healthy preoccupation with failure. However, the other characteristics are lacking.

Implications

There is a positive relationship between the presence of characteristics of High Reliability Organizations and the effectiveness of turnaround strategies. HROs require tightly coupled processes, which are processes that foster interaction between communication and relationships carried out for the purpose of task completion. A similar phenomenon emerges in schools that demonstrate continuous improvement. In these schools, the principal, teachers, and district office personnel express mutual respect for the quality of the tasks they perform. Further, they share relevant data so that they all work together towards a common goal. Finally, these schools have clearly defined and well-communicated processes to reach the goal. It is this continuous cycle of mutual, respectful communication and clearly articulated processes that is engendered by the characteristics of HROs. No one characteristic is more important than the other. All are present in the schools that demonstrate clear growth.

Recommendations

Characteristic of High Reliability Organizations, the recommendations for school and district personnel interrelate as well. Superintendents and other district leaders should establish clear district processes that address student learning. Other recommended practices that align to the characteristics of HROs:

Table 15

Recommendations for District-Level Personnel

CHARACTERISTIC OF HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATIONS	PRACTICE
Deference to expertise	Hire well and trust your hires to do the job All principals the autonomy to do the same at the school site
Healthy preoccupation with failure	Review district performance data on a regular basis
Sensitivity to operations	Deploy resources where they are needed

Table 15 continued

CHARACTERISTIC OF HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATIONS	PRACTICE
Commitment to resilience	Invest in professional development so that staff are comfortable making informed, creative decisions when an aberration, student failure, occurs

Similar to district leaders, principals must establish and communicate processes as well at the school site. Recommended practices for principals are similar to those for district leaders, but apply directly to the school setting.

Table 16

Recommendations for Principals

CHARACTERISTIC OF HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATIONS	PRACTICE
Deference to expertise	Empower and entrust teachers to manage student learning
Healthy preoccupation with failure	Utilize the data from benchmark assessments administered at regular intervals
Reluctance to simplify interpretations	Provide collaborative planning time for teachers to discuss student data
Sensitivity to operations	Share the data to access resources
Commitment to resilience	Provide ongoing staff training

Teachers have a role in the implementation of HRO characteristics. Teachers should provide input into the development of school-wide processes. Since the implementation of processes that focus on student achievement begin in the classroom, teachers should articulate their concerns and make recommendations. Doing so will serve to foster teacher buy-in as well. The other characteristics of HROs can be carried out by teachers in the following manner:

Table 17

Recommendations for Teachers

CHARACTERISTIC OF HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATIONS	PRACTICE
Deference to expertise	Make informed decisions
Healthy preoccupation with failure	Examine own effectiveness
Reluctance to simplify interpretations	Focus planning resulting from student performance data on the individual student
Sensitivity to operations	Share the data with potential sources of support
Commitment to resilience	Pursue ongoing professional development

In summary, the characteristics of High Reliability Organizations must be found at the district-level and permeate to the classroom. Each characteristic is distinct in nature as it relates to each level in which it is implemented; however, the tasks at each level are interrelated.

Conclusion

High-poverty schools that implement systemic, systematic, and sustainable processes that work to prevent student failure share characteristics of High Reliability Organizations. Findings from this study suggest that schools may vary in the degree of implementation of the characteristics, but each of the five characteristics must be operational for positive student growth to occur.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

The primary limitation of this study is the use of only four schools, which prevents the reader from generalizing to a larger setting and/or population. However, this small sample is representative of the types of growth that occurs with the implementation of turnaround strategies. A study with a broader scope to include a larger sampling of district leaders, principals, and teachers could reveal more information related to characteristics of High

Reliability Organizations (HRO) in schools. Further studies should focus on developing specific processes that address each of the HRO characteristics in schools.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. Study Title: Study of Turnaround Efforts in High-Poverty Schools:
Characteristics of High-Reliability Organizations that Determine
Why Some Efforts Succeed and Others Fail
2. Performance Site: Five public, high-poverty comprehensive elementary schools in
Louisiana
3. Contacts: The investigators are available for questions about this study, M-F,
8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Angela Lee, (225) 337-1516; Dr. Roland
Mitchell, (225) 578-2156
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine the factors during the
implementation of turnaround strategies that caused the strategies
either to succeed or to fail.
5. Subjects: Principals, Teachers, and District-Level Immediate Supervisors of
no more than five public, high-poverty comprehensive elementary
schools in Louisiana
6. Number of Subjects: 15
7. Study Procedures: The study will occur in three phases. During the first phase, the
researcher will interview principals individually. During the
second phase, the researcher will interview teachers individually.
During the third phase, the researcher will interview district-level
immediate supervisors of elementary schools individually.
8. Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about the
implementation of turnaround strategies that lead to increased
student academic achievement in high-poverty schools.
9. Risks/Discomforts: There is no known risk.
10. Right to Refuse: Participation in the study is voluntary and subjects may change
their mind and withdraw from the study at any time without
penalty or loss of any benefit to which they may otherwise be
entitled.
11. Privacy: This study is confidential. All file records will be kept secure.
Data will be kept confidential unless release is legally compelled.
12. Financial Information: No compensation for participation or incurred costs by subjects is
offered.

19. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Matthews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Subject Signature: _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This comparative case study will probe the lived experiences of principals, teachers, and district leaders in three types of chronically low-performing, high-poverty schools: (a) schools that have shown clear and unambiguous growth, (b) schools that have remained stagnant and (c) schools that have regressed. A study of these schools will help determine the factors during the implementation of turnaround strategies that caused the strategies either to succeed or to fail.

Specifically, the researcher seeks to answer these questions:

RQ1: What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround?

RQ2: How were the turnaround strategies implemented?

RQ3: How does the implementation design used to implement the turnaround strategies relate to characteristics of High Reliability Organizations (i. e., (a) a healthy preoccupation with failure, (b) a reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) a sensitivity to operations, (d) a commitment to resilience, and (e) deferring of critical decisions to those who have the highest level of expertise in the issue at hand).

RQ4: What factors during implementation contributed to the success or failure of the turnaround strategies?

The researcher will employ the case study qualitative research design to investigate the factors that made some school turnaround efforts successful and others fail. The researcher will select elementary schools in Louisiana based on criteria that includes historical school performance history according to the Louisiana accountability system, socioeconomic status, and special education population. After completing the school selection process, the researcher will implement a qualitative research design, composed of using interviews with principals, teachers, and district leaders, questionnaires, document reviews, and observations.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

District-Level Staff Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the student population in your district. Describe why it is a challenging population. (Prompt with specifics if necessary, e.g., diversity, low SES, etc.). Describe the area in which the district is located. Are the students mainly from the community?
2. What is particularly challenging about educating this student population? What is most difficult for you? What is easiest? Why?
3. Do you feel equipped to deal with this student population? Why? What have you had to learn? How did you learn what you needed to know? (e.g., from colleagues, parents, students, teachers, community)?
4. What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround? (e.g., standards, test, curriculum, turnaround strategies, others).
5. How were the turnaround strategies implemented?
6. What factors during implementation made the strategies succeed or fail?
7. How does the student population impact particularly your implementation of these turnaround strategies? Can you give me specific examples? What are you doing differently in chronically low-performing schools than what you would be doing in a school with a higher-achieving population?
8. (Deference to expertise) How much teacher leadership is there in the district? What form does it take? How does teachers' expertise influence the academic plans/progress for individual students?
9. (Healthy preoccupation with failure) What data is included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing? In what format do these discussions take place? How often are these discussions held? With whom are the findings of these discussions shared?
10. (Reluctance to simplify interpretations) How does the district respond to indicators (e.g., attendance, behavior, course grades) that students are in jeopardy of failing?
11. (Sensitivity to operations) What early warning indicators do you monitor to identify students who are at risk of failing? How deeply does the communication concerning student performance permeate the school? (i.e., do current teachers consult with former teachers of students? Is communication across grade levels? Is communication across content areas?)
12. (Commitment to resilience) How is professional development implemented at the school? Do you allow teachers the freedom to determine, develop, and carry out professional development as they deem appropriate? If so, what is the basis for their selection? If not, why not?

Principal Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the student population in your school. Describe why it is a challenging population. (Prompt with specifics if necessary, e.g., diversity, low SES, etc.). Describe the neighborhood surrounding the school. Are the students mainly from the community?
2. What is particularly challenging about educating this student population? What is most difficult for you? What is easiest? Why?
3. Do you feel equipped to deal with this student population? Why? What have you had to learn? How did you learn what you needed to know? (e.g., from colleagues, parents, students, teachers, community)?
4. What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround? (e.g., standards, test, curriculum, turnaround strategies, others).
5. How were the turnaround strategies implemented?
6. What factors during implementation made the strategies succeed or fail?
7. How does the student population impact particularly your implementation of these accountability initiatives? Can you give me specific examples? What are you doing differently here than what you would be doing in a school with a higher-achieving population?
8. (Deference to expertise) How much teacher leadership is there in your school? What form does it take? How does teachers' expertise influence the academic plans/progress for individual students?
9. (Healthy preoccupation with failure) What data is included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing? In what format do these discussions take place? How often are these discussions held? With whom are the findings of these discussions shared?
10. (Reluctance to simplify interpretations) How do you respond to indicators (e.g., attendance, behavior, course grades) that students are in jeopardy of failing?
11. (Sensitivity to operations) What early warning indicators do you monitor to identify students who are at risk of failing? How deep does the communication concerning student performance permeate the school? (i.e., do current teachers consult with former teachers of students? Is communication across grade levels? Is communication across content areas?)
12. (Commitment to resilience) How is professional development implemented at the school? Do you allow teachers the freedom to determine, develop, and carry out professional development as they deem appropriate? If so, what is the basis for their selection? If not, why not?

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the student population in your school. Describe why it is a challenging population. (Prompt with specifics if necessary, e.g., diversity, low SES, etc.). Describe the neighborhood surrounding the school. Are the students mainly from the community?

2. What is particularly challenging about educating this student population? What is most difficult for you? What is easiest? Why?
3. Do you feel equipped to deal with this student population? Why? What have you had to learn? How did you learn what you needed to know? (e.g., from colleagues, parents, students, teachers, community)?
4. What strategies have been implemented to effect school turnaround? (e.g., standards, test, curriculum, turnaround strategies, others).
5. How were the turnaround strategies implemented?
6. What factors during implementation made the strategies succeed or fail?
7. How does the student population impact particularly your implementation of these accountability initiatives? Can you give me specific examples? What are you doing differently here than what you would be doing in a school with a higher-achieving population?
8. (Deference to expertise) How much teacher leadership is there in your school? What form does it take? How does teachers' expertise influence the academic plans/progress for individual students?
9. (Healthy preoccupation with failure) What data is included in the discussion of students who are found to be at risk of failing? In what format do these discussions take place? How often are these discussions held? With whom are the findings of these discussions shared?
10. (Reluctance to simplify interpretations) How do you respond to indicators (e.g., attendance, behavior, course grades) that students are in jeopardy of failing?
11. (Sensitivity to operations) What early warning indicators do you monitor to identify students who are at risk of failing? How deep does the communication concerning student performance permeate the school? (i.e., do current teachers consult with former teachers of students? Is communication across grade levels? Is communication across content areas?)
12. (Commitment to resilience) How is professional development implemented at the school? Do you allow teachers the freedom to determine, develop, and carry out professional development as they deem appropriate? If so, what is the basis for their selection? If not, why not?

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml>

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtaining.com/users/login.php>)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://www.lsu.edu/irb/IRB%20Security%20of%20Data.pdf>)



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

1) Principal Investigator: Roland Mitchell, Ph.D.

Rank: Assistant Professor

Dept: Educational Theory, Policy, & Practice

Ph: (225) 578-2156

E-mail: rwmitch@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

Angela Lee
Educational Theory, Policy, & Practice
Graduate Student
(225) 337-1516

alee22@tigers.lsu.edu

IRB# ES829 LSU Proposal # _____

☐ Complete Application

☒ Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title:

A Study of Turnaround Efforts in High-Poverty Schools: Characteristics of High-Reliability Organizations that Determine Why Some Efforts Succeed and Others Fail

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 2/7/2015

4) Proposal? (yes or no) ☐ No

If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____

Also, if YES, either

☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant

OR

☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

Elementary School Principals, Teachers, District-Level Supervisors

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature _____

Date

1/16/12

(no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph 2

Reviewer

Mathews

Signature

Robert C Mathews

Date

2/7/12

Consent Form

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb

Exemption Expires: 2/7/2015

1. Study Title: A Study of Turnaround Efforts in High-Poverty Schools
Characteristics of High-Reliability Organizations that Determine Why Some Efforts Succeed and Others Fail
2. Performance Site: Five public, high-poverty comprehensive elementary schools in Louisiana
3. Contacts: The investigators are available for questions about this study, M-F, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Angela Lee, (225) 337-1516; Dr. Roland Mitchell, (225) 578-2156
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine the factors during the implementation of turnaround strategies that caused the strategies either to succeed or to fail.
5. Subjects: Principals, Teachers, and District-Level Immediate Supervisors of no more than five public, high-poverty comprehensive elementary schools in Louisiana
6. Number of Subjects: 15
7. Study Procedures: The study will occur in three phases. During the first phase, the researcher will interview principals individually. During the second phase, the researcher will interview teachers individually. During the third phase, the researcher will interview district-level immediate supervisors of elementary schools individually.
8. Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about the implementation of turnaround strategies that lead to increased student academic achievement in high-poverty schools.
9. Risks/Discomforts: There is no known risk.
10. Right to Refuse: Participation in the study is voluntary and subjects may change their mind and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they may otherwise be entitled.
11. Privacy: This study is confidential. All file records will be kept secure. Data will be kept confidential unless release is legally compelled.
12. Financial Information: No compensation for participation or incurred costs by subjects is offered.
19. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Matthews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

VITA

Angela Renee Lee-Domingue was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in November 1971 to Mr. and Mrs. Willie Lee, Jr. She graduated from Baton Rouge Magnet High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in May 1989 and earned her Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in secondary education with a concentration in English, in May 1991 from Southern University in Baton Rouge. She earned her Master of Education degree in secondary education from Southern University in 1993. Later, she earned thirty hours above the Master's degree from the University of New Orleans in English liberal arts and continued to earn certification in supervision and administration.

Upon completion of the Bachelor of Science degree, Mrs. Lee-Domingue served as a teacher of English to high school students at West Feliciana High School. Transferring to the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, she taught at Woodlawn High and Scotlandville Magnet High. While teaching in local high schools, she taught in the department of English at Southern University, Baton Rouge as an adjunct instructor.

Mrs. Lee-Domingue has 21 years of professional experience in Louisiana public schools. This experience was gained while she served as a teacher of English, assistant principal, principal, director of elementary programs, and special assistant to the superintendent. She managed the development and implementation of the strategic plan for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System and led the AdvancED district accreditation process.

She is a member of the Louisiana Educators Association, Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and the Elm Grove Baptist Church. She is an alumnus of Leadership Greater Baton Rouge, a fellow of the Effective Leadership Program at the Center for Leadership and

Public Values at the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University, and the SUPES Academy.

Mrs. Lee-Domingue has presented at national, regional, state, and local conferences for AdvancED, the Stupski Foundation, and the Council of Great City Schools. She has held offices in several professional and civic organizations including the Academic Distinction Fund, Health Care Centers in Schools, the Children's Coalition, the Capital Area Reading Council, and the Greater Baton Rouge Literacy Coalition. She is married to the Reverend Errol K. Domingue, and they currently live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.